

Man and God in the Works of Robinson Jeffers

by

Marlan Beilke, B. A.

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in English

THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

HOBART

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STATEMENT

"Man and God in the Works of Robinson Jeffers" is a product of my long-standing interest in the poetry of Robinson Jeffers. As such, the commentary contained herein reflects my own ideas and observations which have not been recorded previously. This material has never been submitted to nor accepted by any institution of higher learning for any undergraduate or advanced degree. Furthermore, in an effort to maintain a clear view of the subject, I have endeavoured to avoid conscious or subsonscious paraphrasing of the work of others. On the few occasions when it was necessary to make reference to other works, due mention has been made in the neighboring text; a glance at the bibliography will provide the full particulars of the work in question.

But perhaps I may be pardoned one plagiarism which is lifted verbatim from the cautionary note preceding S. S. Alberts' monumental A Bibliography of the Works of Robinson Jeffers of 1933:

TO THE READER

Who faulteth not, liveth not; who mendeth faults is commended: The printer hath faulted a little: it may be the author oversighted more. Thy paine (Reader) is the least; then erre not thou most by misconstruing or sharp censuring; least thou be more uncharitable, then either of them hath been heedlesse: God amend and guide us all.

--Robartes on Tythes 4^o Camb. 1613.

Signed,

Marlan Beilke

Marlan Beilke, Sutter Creek, California, November, 1972.

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SUMMARY

Man and God in the Works of Robinson Jeffers

Two of the greatest questions any man can ask and attempt to answer in his lifetime were consistently handled by Robinson Jeffers in his poetry: "Who is God?" and "What is man?" This thesis attempts through extensive reference to Jeffers' innermost thoughts as faithfully recorded in his short poems to plot the record of the poet's wrestling with "these questions; old coins / Rubbed faceless, dateless." Robinson Jeffers' considerations of the primordial human yearning for God and the conjectural provenance of man rank him in the rare company of the great poets.

Over the years Robinson Jeffers wrote little which revealed a basic new concept of God, but he did much to emphasize and elucidate the nature and divine attributes of God. With man the case is somewhat different. Jeffers' view of man did alter--slightly. The early Jeffers anticipated the possibility of man embracing a rational and natural deity. Experience indicated otherwise and the poet's view of man, never warm or encomiastic, became colder still and more searchingly realistic. The appalling spectacle of the Second World War only served to vindicate Jeffers' harsh view of man, a view which he staunchly held to his death.

On the other hand, Jeffers' vision for man, based as it is

on the poet's love of his God, did not alter over the years. Robinson Jeffers felt from the outset that man, while he had not yet begun to attain his spiritual potential, had an honorable future before him. Even in his own lifetime, Jeffers held that man already possessed the wherewithal (but none of the resolve) to "choose truth" at last. This discrepancy between man's potential and his actual performance deeply grieved and dismayed the poet of Tor House. To the end, however, Robinson Jeffers cherished the long-term hope that man might one day "come of age", that, in the words of an old friend, humanity might "pass through the present crisis, and emerge in a complete renaissance of godliness."

The searing impact of Jeffers' religious experience provides the core for his poetry. More than any other factor, Robinson Jeffers' theology is central to the understanding of what he actually wrote. His view of the omnipotent, monistic, self-torturing God of fate is the primum mobile of Jeffers' achievement as poet.

Because he is so intensely religious, Jeffers has been intensely misunderstood in his own secular age. The God whose signature is the beauty of things is undeniably present in the natural world Jeffers felt to be divine. But an order of men devoutly in tune with the God of Robinson Jeffers' poetry is yet to be born.

Man and God in the Works of Robinson Jeffers

Preface

In the decade since Robinson Jeffers' death, critical commentary has begun to challenge the notion that Jeffers' ideas remained constant and static throughout his career. It is understandable how early commentators reached such conclusions. Jeffers' ideas were scarcely conventional, and they were repeated--with emphasis--at various times in Jeffers' mature work. The nature of the ideas, the consistent and solid backing which Jeffers gave them, and their steadfast, persistent reiteration provided the basis for the initial assumptions of arrant repetition on Jeffers' part.

That such assumptions were hasty or premature and often reflected the individual's misreading (or, still worse, distortion) of Jeffers' ideas generally passed unnoticed. Much of the inaccurate comment came from high places, and some, as Jeffers loconically pointed out, was even intended to be friendly. All too often the startling nature of the ideas themselves led commentators to transpose their own notions for Jeffers' concepts.

In an Imagist age, few were prepared to credit the advantages to a poet of a firm ideological framework--particularly so if that framework cut across the contemporary critical biases. In an age of skepticism and turmoil, a staunch poetical ideol-

ogy seemed anachronistic. Some merely dismissed Jeffers as a ranting nihilist who sought to destroy all that was sacred and dear; Jeffers the poet who offered no alternatives. With the passing of time and the arrival of more conscientious commentators, the allegations of senseless nihilism and of vain repetition became increasingly less tenable.

Jeffers' mature published works span the thirty-nine turbulent years between 1924 and 1963. Robinson Jeffers' lifetime saw two world wars, the ascendancy and triumph of science and technology, the Great Depression, and America's rise to status as world power (let alone myriad personal events of import). Such events deeply influenced Jeffers' poetry. Ideas are modified by the events of the age in which they occur. It is a fascinating task to attempt to catalogue the flow of Jeffers' ideas and to determine whether these ideas were modified, embellished, reinforced, or clarified over the years.

If, however, his flow of ideas is not presently obvious to us, in all likelihood the fault is not Jeffers'. Few modern poets employ his abiding clarity and forthrightness. Any volume of Jeffers' mature work contains many of his major ideas--openly stated. Should the ideas elude us, the fault is more likely in ourselves that we are the more accustomed to vagueness than to vision. Any contemporary consideration of Jeffers' ideology should seek to dispel some of the confusion which still beclouds those ideas; as well, such a commentary should attempt

to gather and summarize Jeffers' basic ideas.

Because of the remarkable scope of Robinson Jeffers' poetry, a complete study of the formulation of his ideas is a major undertaking. An inventory of Jeffers' ideas (as expressed in his poems) might include the following wide-ranging categories: God, man, nature, death, history (and the concept of culture-ages), science, art, the prophet in America, and the nature of human society. Although Jeffers managed--sometimes in spite of his aesthetic principles--to comment intensively upon these issues, his primary and permanent concerns were with the elemental questions of every age. Robinson Jeffers unremittingly sought the truth concerning the most basic questions an intelligent human being can ask: "Who is God?" and "What is man?" These were the major issues with which Jeffers wrestled throughout his long career as poet. Robinson Jeffers' ideas of God and man are cardinal to his entire career and provide therefore the nucleus for any study which attempts to trace the poet's central themes.

Such a study, however, must be delineated still further. Should it concentrate upon Jeffers' longer narrative poems or upon the shorter so-called lyric poems? There seems to be substantial merit in such a limitation. While it would be fatuous ultimately to ignore Jeffers' ideas on God and man as evinced in his narratives, Jeffers puts more of himself in the shorter poems. We may, with reasonable certitude, assume that unless

Jeffers intervenes in the first person, the narratives contain his ideas strained through the minds of his characters. On the other hand, the shorter poems present, generally in the first person, Jeffers' unadorned opinions, thoughts and observations. Thus, the shorter poems are the purer source of Jeffers' ideas.

Is it presumption to credit any modern poet with speaking unslantedly and candidly what he believes to be true in a short poem? In Robinson Jeffers' case, Hale Chatfield provides an answer to this problem in his perceptive article: "Robinson Jeffers: His Philosophy and His Major Themes."¹

(Jeffers) frequently interjects comments into his dramas that indicate very effectively where his sympathies lie. Jeffers' manner of writing poetry makes it easier to distinguish his notions and opinions in his work than is the case with almost any other poet.

He (Jeffers) wrote in 1933:

'I decided not to tell lies in verse. Not to feign any emotion that I did not feel; not to pretend to believe in optimism or pessimism, or unreversible progress; not to say anything because it was popular, or generally accepted, or fashionable in intellectual circles, unless I myself believed it; and not to believe easily.'

There is, I think, no reason to doubt the sincerity of that statement. Upon its evidence and by authority of the fact that Jeffers is without exception a solemn and serious poet, I have decided to forget some of the things we have been learning since the twenties and to operate in this study upon a conviction that everything in Jeffers' poetry that is not enclosed in quotation marks is Jeffers' honest opinion.

Moreover, although there may be some question as to the relation-

¹ Hale Chatfield, "Robinson Jeffers: His Philosophy and His Major Themes", The Laurel Review, Volume VI, No. 2, Fall 1966, p. 58.

ship between Jeffers' ideas and his characters in the narratives, there is little doubt about who is saying what in the shorter poems.

There is abundant evidence in Jeffers' writings which affirms the poet's gravity and truthfulness. Recalling Nietzsche's condemnation of poets from Also Sprach Zarathustra ("The poets lie too much"), Robinson Jeffers in his poem "Self-Criticism in February", countered: "I can tell lies in prose."² In his 1941 volume Be Angry at the Sun, Jeffers tells us that Bruce Ferguson, the principal character of his poem "Mara", is close to Jeffers himself regarding his thirst for truth:

Tomorrow I will take up that heavy poem again
About Ferguson, deceived and jealous man
Who bawled for the truth, the truth, and failed to endure
Its first least gleam. That poem bores me, and I hope will
bore
Any sweet soul that reads it, being some ways
My very self but mostly my antipodes;³

In the Foreward to Selected Poetry Robinson Jeffers says of his poems: "It seems to me that their meaning is not obscure."⁴

Robinson Jeffers wrote his ideas plainly, honestly, truthfully into his verse. By nature, Jeffers' poetry is free of ruse,

² Robinson Jeffers, Such Counsels You Gave To Me and Other Poems, Random House, New York, 1937, p. 118.

³ Robinson Jeffers, Be Angry at the Sun and Other Poems, Random House, New York, 1941, p. 137.

⁴ Robinson Jeffers, Foreward to The Selected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers, Random House, New York, 1938, p. xiv.

obscurity or intentional deception. His ideas on God and man as revealed in the poems deserve a reciprocal attention. A chronological study of Jeffers' ideas on God and man as recorded in his short poems should both reveal the nascence and implementation of Robinson Jeffers' ideology and simultaneously clarify those same ideas.

The Early Years (1887-1923): God

In retrospect, it seems appropriate that Robinson Jeffers should have become the most theological of twentieth century American poets. His father, Dr. William Hamilton Jeffers, was a learned divine who specialized in ancient Near Eastern languages. Dr. William Jeffers also wished that one day his first son would follow in his footsteps. To this end the young future poet was carefully and ceaselessly prepared. Robinson Jeffers' father was schooling the young lad in Latin and Greek at an age when most young boys (even of Robin's day) were scarcely out of the nursery school stage.

These sturdy lessons in language were intended to be the springboard into still other more exotic languages, languages which would one day be of inestimable value to a son who it was hoped would take his place among the clerical elite. This solid and rigorous preparation in languages the young prodigy was to find invaluable--not in the cloth, but in poetry.

Robinson Jeffers was also schooled in the Bible by his elderly father. Throughout his life, Robinson Jeffers was able to locate scriptural references at will, a permanent carry-over from his training as a youth. Both his mother and father combined to provide a thorough understanding of the Old and New Testaments. The influence of his childhood intimacy with the Bible is to be found in every volume of Robinson Jeffers' poetry,

so much so that a student of poetry unfamiliar with the Bible will probably find much of the verse enigmatic in its references. Theology (especially the Presbyterianism of his youth) permeates Jeffers' work.

But of course there is more to Robinson Jeffers' religious outlook than reworked biblical language and stories. Unlike most of the poets of his time, Jeffers concerned himself with important theological issues and evaluated them, summarized them, and passed judgment upon them. Later, Jeffers forged ahead on the theological front by formulating a theology uniquely his own.

Jeffers' fascination with theology was not ephemeral, stale, or vapid. More than any other American poet of his day, Jeffers dared to grapple throughout a lengthy and productive lifetime with the age-old theological questions of man. One of the most salient aspects of Robinson Jeffers' poetry is this persistent theological probing. If a complete Robinson Jeffers concordance existed, pages would be required for the listing "God".

Nor was Jeffers a mocker or an imitator in theological matters. He had no quarrel of lasting significance with any religion; neither did he espouse the tenets of one particular established religion. The opposite extreme--that of being so diffuse and eclectic that no precise theological tenets might be perceived--also does not apply to Robinson Jeffers' verse. Indeed,

throughout his career, critics found fault with the specificities of Jeffers' theological views.

From childhood to old age Jeffers was fascinated by the idea of God. Accordingly, conceptions of God pervade Robinson Jeffers' work. Attempts at the definition of God were one of the principal thrusts of Jeffers' writing, yet there is never present the mindless and maudlin groping of less intelligent and less able versifiers of a theological bent.

Precisely what Jeffers' childhood religious training was like will probably remain a subject for inquiry. The training was thorough, basic, enlightened, broad; it was also restrictive, demanding, and rigorous. The young Jeffers was instilled with the worthy Calvinistic values of hard work and self-discipline, qualities which assured one a special place in God's world. Undoubtedly Robin found the demands placed upon him and the expectations of his parents too confining, for evidences of his personal rebellion are to be found in Jeffers' college verse. However, Jeffers did not feel resentment of any kind toward either of his parents because of their expectations for or training of him. He merely felt that their goals selected for him were misplaced, that somehow he was not deserving of their care, affection and tutelage.

Robinson Jeffers refers to his father--with deep affection--in his mature verse. The son laments disappointing the father

who had hoped for a theologian to follow in the father's footsteps; albeit, when it became obvious that his son was interested in poetry as a career, Dr. Jeffers championed the new vocation with vigor.

Many facts of Robinson Jeffers' early years are included in Bennett's biography, The Stone Mason of Tor House. The chafings and dissatisfactions of youth were a part of Jeffers' adolescence. However, once he had chosen poetry as his calling, and once his circumstances allowed him to produce verse of a satisfactory type, Jeffers no longer insisted upon kicking at the traces of his parental upbringing. Instead, Robinson Jeffers went on to become a successful poet using the very values, disciplines, and attitudes of mind which he had found mildly distasteful as a youth. His beloved wife, Una, shaped him, it is true, but Jeffers' approaches to his work and life were essentially those learned in childhood from his father. A convincing case can be made that the mystique of Robinson Jeffers--poet-recluse, misanthrope, lover of nature and privacy--was a reincarnation of his father's customs and temperament. That the son, like his father before him, should have an abiding interest in theology seems singularly appropriate. Other parallels are considerable.

We would expect to find in Jeffers' first poems something of his Calvinistic background as well as a hint or two of his mild revolt against that background. (Jeffers himself describ-

ed his college years as "desultory" for example.) Theologically, however, Jeffers' juvenilia do not feature, as one might expect in his immature verse, a preponderant interest in God. A kernel or two, however, of Jeffers' thoughts on the topic of God is significantly present. Reasons why Robinson Jeffers' early poems are not abundantly concerned with theology are not difficult to find. The poet was young, sensitive, and immature. A serious and personal topic such as one's theology could wait for more appropriate and more ordered days. In all likelihood, Jeffers had not as yet formulated his thoughts on the topic in a fashion suitable for verse. The early poems were occasional in nature, tailored for such outlets as college literary journals, annuals, magazines. The quality of the verse, as one would expect, was exploratory, imitative and (for Jeffers) disciplinary in nature. The early poetry (everything which predates the Californians volume of 1916) could not be edited as was Jeffers' mature work. His juvenilia are only fragments, chips and splinters over a period of thirteen years (1903-1916), valuable to us because they shed a dim light on the development of a great talent. Not as theologically rich as Jeffers' mature work, the early poems are nevertheless not without interest as an index to Robinson Jeffers' theological notions in his formative years.

Any commentary on Jeffers' early verse must undeniably be conditioned by familiarity with later achievement; there is, therefore, a certain danger in reading too much into these early

and poetically inconsequential efforts. Nonetheless, scattered kernels of thought of the mature poet are distinguishable to the alert and unpretentious reader. Perhaps the most general statement which can be made regarding Robinson Jeffers' theology as revealed in his early poems is that the God found there is strong and powerful, a solace for the poet. Two other aspects of Jeffers' conception of God are present in many of the early verses. The first attribute of God is that he is timeless, permanent, beyond the ages. "The Measure", a poem written while Jeffers was a sixteen year old student (college junior) at Occidental College features a trinity against which one may measure the universe: "Truly great / Alone are Space, Eternity and God." God here is included as something of a third dimension: space, time, and God. Already Jeffers postulates a deity who transcends the ordinary limits of mortality and time.

The second attribute of Jeffers' God is a corollary of the first: namely that he is open to those who seek him; that this God stands revealed in the natural world only he could create. In other words, God is omnipresent in that he presides over nature by virtue of his physical presence in things natural. This, of course, is close to the pantheist view of things. Still another 1903 Jeffers poem, "Dawn", while including a conventional reference to the Hebrew conception of "Seraphim", makes reference to a God-like sun: "The sun strides kingly forth in golden robes of pride."

Another aspect of Jeffers' early religiosity is to be found in two poems printed in the March 1904 edition of The Aurora, Occidental College's literary magazine of the day. The first of these poems, "The Wild Hunt", is an imaginary encounter by a group of besworded horsemen with "the King of Shades" and his ominous crew. The mood is foreboding, in tone similar to that of the Flying Dutchmen, the western ballad "Ghost Riders in the Sky", or the more melancholy portions of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner". The diction and dialogue have a distinctly Celtic air. The poem contains one of the first of Robinson Jeffers' many references to heavily oppressive evil, iniquity and sin almost embodied in the world. Here, evil, though the horsemen would like to belittle its presence and influence, is brought before them in a most immediate manner; the mortal horsemen are entirely powerless before the black and other-worldly specters who gallop past in menacing and undeniably realistic actuality. And, significantly, the conventional religious gesture of crossing one's self when in danger or the presence of evil is dismissed as valueless: "For what is the sign of a half-made cross to fiends in their wood on their night?"

In "The Wild Hunt" then we note two new theological positions: that evil is a real and incontrovertibly fundamental force, and that mere humans seem powerless to prevent its fatalistic operation in the world. The very subject matter of the poem indicates that the young Jeffers was dabbling in extra-

Christian superstitions. (A 1906 poem entitled "The Forsaken Cabin" which appeared in The University Courier--a student weekly published at the University of Southern California, Jeffers' first graduate school--portrays Jeffers' own encounter with a presumably haunted cabin. After scrutinizing then skirting it, Jeffers writes: "I turned with a half-whistle and a smile-- / But looked across my shoulder leaving it.")

The second of the March 1904 poems reinforces the contention that Robinson Jeffers already was exploring a theology which was at variance with Christian orthodoxy. "Witches" has distinctly Macbethan overtones (gibbets and Murderer's sweat) as well as hints of the trials at Salem. Perhaps there is a bit of humor as well: "(And is your wife at home?)" asks the whimsical seventeen year old versifier. And again the tone and diction are Celtic and decidedly pre-Christian.

In his senior year at Occidental College the name of the student publication was changed from The Aurora to The Occidental. "Jeff," as he was familiarly known to his classmates, was the editor of the publication, and no doubt had a hand in the change of names, for he remarked years later that it seemed inconsistent to him that a school of the West named Occidental should have a publication whose title, The Aurora, evoked images of the dawn in the East. The October 1904 issue of The Occidental carried a poem by Jeffers entitled "Mountain Pines". The mood attributed to these high-altitude trees is a somber one. Isolation

and loneliness are the lot of these pines whose "gnarled roots cling / Like wasted fingers of a clutching hand / In the grim rock." It is the passing shadow of a great eagle which for a sad, all too brief time enkindles life in this "silent spectral band" of trees "...then / They find a soul, and their dim moan is wrought / Into a sighing sad and beautiful." The bright spirit of the eagle is able to breathe a fleeting life into the forest. Jeffers seems to be providing a hint of one of his subsequent major theological tenents: that God and nature are unified into one physical entity.

The bleak tones of "Mountain Pines" are matched by "The Condor", a poem which could easily pass as companion piece to its successor, so similar are the settings, subjects and moods of these two poems. All could not have been gloom, however, since the June 9, 1941 edition of The Youth's Companion magazine featured, complete with illustration, a new poem called "The Condor" and its editors promptly forwarded to Robinson Jeffers the first remuneration in his career, a check for fifteen dollars.

Later in his senior year at Occidental, Jeffers seems to have been much taken with the poetry of William Wordsworth. A growing naturalism is reflected even in the titles of two poems: "The Lake", which appeared in The Occidental, and "The Stream", printed after Jeffers' graduation from college in Out West Magazine. The final three lines of "The Lake" reveal a troubled

young poet who turns to the solace of "a lonely lake" in his "darker hours":

Then, for my soul's release,
Upon that lake as to my home
I'll turn and find some peace.

The final three lines of "The Stream" are a similar expression of the tranquility to be found in unspoiled nature:

One might seek peace and find her yonder,
Where waters wild and wet winds wander,
And having found, one might forget.

At the age of eighteen, we find Robinson Jeffers turning not to conventional religion, but to nature as his solace in real or imagined distress.

In the autumn of 1905 Robinson Jeffers enrolled as a graduate student in world literature at the University of Southern California and lost no time in placing more of his poems in college publications. The November 1905 issue of USC's The Cardinal contains his poem "Steadfast Sky" the final lines of which admonish one to appreciate the fact that the physical universe is basically stable no matter how flashily magnificent the exteriors may appear:

So imitate
The eternal sky that changes not at all
While ever the new splendors of it change.

In "The Moon's Girls", an unpublished but copyrighted poem of 1907, Jeffers once again considers the occult and

visionary as worthy subject matter for his verse. The setting is long ago and far away, the notions are classic, the tone is Shelleyesque, the theme is that of the dream-swept lover, and there is no longer any hint of a Christian influence in the poem.

"Pan in the West" of 1911 moves further into the pagan religions and into pantheism. There is a new revelation recorded here:

For, wandering along a rocky way
 'Neath western pines, one unforgotten day,
I felt thee, saw thee suddenly, and knew
 That where white water ran,
Where trees shook or grass grew,
 Thou wert, too, O Cosmopolitan.

"Pan in the West" is a significant transitional piece in the theological development of Robinson Jeffers. Prior to this poem, Jeffers had decided to abandon the orthodox Christianity learned so diligently in his childhood from his parents. His poetical attitude had been unChristian, though by no means anti-Christian. Heretofore the young poet's yearnings after a deity were imitations, distant, hollow, aloof, lacking in moral weight or intensity. For the first time one catches, in "Pan in the West", a glimpse of noteworthy theological maturation by the poet. He made the observation through insight that a nature deity (such as the classic notion of Pan) need not be relegated to bygone eras; a deity's physical presence may be detected and perceived in a fleeting, golden moment anywhere-- even while climbing Mt. San Gabriel in southern California.

The experience described in "Pan in the West" is obviously of a mystical nature--the first of those which Jeffers was to attempt to record in his poetry. By 1911, then, Robinson Jeffers had come to the realization that a God of nature was not limited to the classical world; he was omnipresent enough to be felt by a twenty-four year old poet in the west of the United States early in the twentieth century.

On December 4, 1912, a quaint little book of some 46 pages was issued by the Grafton Publishing Company of Los Angeles. The title, handily abstracted from the Song of Solomon 2:5, was Flagons and Apples; the poet was John Robinson Jeffers, his full name appearing in book form once in his career in deference to his namesake uncle from whom Jeffers had recently inherited sufficient funds for this first book venture. Flagons and Apples (publication price: \$1) was entirely financed by its author, who even wrote his own reviews. The book did not sell. His vanity satisfied by the mere act of publication, young Jeffers went on to more important things, the courting of his already married sweetheart, for example. 480 copies of the forgotten, neglected, thin little volume were remaindered for twenty cents each. Jeffers advised his publisher that the book be pulped to spare a forest tree. In 1933, with his reputation established, Flagons and Apples sold (when rarely available) for \$60; more recently, it has fetched amounts approaching \$400. For all its

rarity, there is little lasting merit to the book (other than its interest as a document in the poet's development), Jeffers himself being the first to realize this and say so.

A concordance to the volume indicates that Jeffers used the term "God" twenty times in Flagons and Apples, not insignificant since the tone of the book is almost completely amatory. We would assume, from the Biblical derivation of the title, that Robinson Jeffers in 1912 was still under considerable influence of the Bible, its teachings and literary style. Such an assumption is only partially justified by the contents of Flagons and Apples.

An understanding of the theology as found in Flagons and Apples is facilitated by a brief account of Jeffers' circumstances at the time of publication, the book being highly biographical throughout. Since 1905 when Robinson Jeffers had first met her in a German class at USC, Una Call Kuster had haunted his life. Try as he might, there was no dismissing his fascination with this woman who was two years his senior and already happily married for three years to Theodore Kuster.

There is no blinking at the fact (despite the glosses of Jeffers' biographer) that theirs was an extremely unusual relationship. The eight long years between 1905 when they met and 1913 when they were married were years of torment for both the ill-starred lovers. Adultery, as Jeffers had been taught at

home, and as he learned throughout eight years of bitter experience, was not all roses. Flagons and Apples stands at the near culmination of Robinson Jeffers' dolorous and unenviable circumstances as suitor to Una Kuster. It is highly questionable whether Jeffers ever recovered from his deep feelings of guilt caused by this relationship. On the surface at least, Una did not appear to have suffered as deeply although her subsequent conduct marks her as one attempting to justify her prior illicit actions.

But what do we learn of Jeffers' views of God as contained in his first book? The principal attribute of the deity found in Flagons and Apples is jealous vengeance. There are hints of Jeffers' adolescent nature worship in the first poem of the book, "Her Praises"

Where alone in fiery-colored noontides,
Hid under dreaming branches,
Lurks and lives the Godhead whom we worship,--

but the deity of Flagons and Apples is, by and large, a "jealous God" who, like Erinyes, ceaselessly sets the world of the wrongdoer right. Jeffers may cast angelic metaphors around his loved one (presumably Una) in the first poem of the book.

Then I praise you, worthy of adoration
More than any laughing springtime goddess,
But sister of the immortal
White supreme divinities of heaven

but throughout the volume there is a pervasive fear of an ominous destroying evil which in "Nemesis" Jeffers sees possibly as

disfiguring even Una's physical beauty:

Lest evil come of your great wonderful beauty, and of
God's envy, and my surpassing happiness.

Perhaps more than any other poem in Flagons and Apples "Nemesis" is fraught with feelings of guilt. Guiltiness is easily transferred to others, and in Jeffers' case he transfers his guilt feelings to God himself, imagining that God is envious of the two lovers' untoward happiness. On the surface it does not occur to the poet that it is he who is in conflict with the decalogue, but subconsciously Jeffers is extremely fearful of divine retribution as the final four tearing lines of "Nemesis" reveal:

For joy is the foam of a wave that breaks on the
world's low shore:
Dear and desired is that foam, but around it and
underneath
What ghastly gulfs abysmal, that blacken forever-
more
With death and despair and the terror of monstrous
teeth!

In a far less somber poem entitled "The Quarrel" we observe the twenty-five year old Jeffers after a petulant lover's spat magnetically attracted to what might have been Olvera Street, the oldest settled portion of Los Angeles, but he seems more attracted to the religious air of the place than to its antiquity:

When I left you I wandered at will
Where our modern city has a
Slight air of antiquity still--
Down by the Mexican Plaza.

And the bell of Our Lady with no low
Tones, but with confident voice,
Struck ten

Quite possibly Robinson Jeffers at the time--whether he wandered "at will" or not--was allowing his feelings of guilt to be assuaged by casual religious association.

We find that God "smiles bitterly" twice in the poem "And Afterward". But the increasing hopelessness of his situation culminates in Jeffers' skepticism regarding the very existence of God. The first lines of "End of Summer"

Let us give thanks to God, my lady,
If any God at all there be,
That the time coming finds us ready
To sever without agony

find Jeffers denying divine intervention in the conclusion of a love affair which probably did not involve Una, while "The Night" is authored by a poet contemplating moral relativism:

There is no God will tell us now
If I did wrong, if I did right.

Perhaps the truest record of Jeffers' thoughts on God in the Flagons and Apples period is the poem "Noon" which exposes in the heat of an oceanside sun a God-possessed, near-terrified young man who knows all too well the mighty power of an immanent God:

Noon

Hot waves of ancient waters drone
Against the shore ancestral hate.
Their dull, relentless monotone
Is as the very voice of fate.

What madness kindles in my head
What God lays violent hands on me,

That the high sun is perfect dread,
And perfect terror the flat sea?

The blazing noon is like a load
Insufferable, too hard to bear..
O wild and cruel and occult God,
Have mercy on thy worshipper!

For the first time we have a record of one of Jeffers' most basic theological tenets: that God "is," as he was to write much later, "hardly a friend of humanity." As contrast, here is a poem by the same title (the only time Jeffers titles two poems thus, presumably having forgotten the "Noon" of Flacons and Apples) which appeared in 1927, when the poet was at the height of his productive genius. The difference in quality of the two poems is immense and yet the thoughts dovetail:

Noon

The pure air trembles, O pitiless God,
The air arches with flame on these gaunt rocks
Over the flat sea's face, the forest
Shakes in gales of piercing light.

But the altars are behind and higher
Where the great hills raise naked heads,
Pale agonists in the reverberance
Of the pure air and the pitiless God.

On the domed skull of every hill
Who stands blazing with spread vans,
The arms uplifted, the eyes in ecstasy?

What wine has the God drunk, to sing
Violently in heaven, what wine his worshippers
Whose silence blazes? The Light that is over
Light, the terror of noon, the eyes
That the eagles die at, have thrown down
Me and my pride, here I lie naked
In a hollow of the shadowless rocks,
Full of the God, having drunk fire.

The sea is flat, the sun is bright, the victim willingly present,

but how different the poems! Terror and torture have given way to winged sacrifice to appease the awesome deity of noon.

In "Another Saul" Robinson Jeffers makes yet another Biblical reference, this time from the New Testament account of the miraculous conversion of St. Paul (Acts 9:1-22). As a relevant sidelight, S. S. Alberts on page 57 of his A Bibliography of the Works of Robinson Jeffers of 1933, notes that Jeffers was considering the Saul theme again in 1925 or 1926. A poem entitled "Saul" was written about this time, but was never published. As was his practice, Jeffers used the reverse side of the "Saul" poem on which to write the first draft of "The Broken Balance IV" which appeared in the Dear Judas volume of 1929. But in "Another Saul" from Flagons and Apples Jeffers again senses that

God mocks me in his mirth, or else
Perhaps in wrath.

God's voice was never clear, but O
Sweetheart, sweetheart, your voice was clear!

Jeffers feels that his Damascus road experience must come from his beloved who will clarify all things for him. But in the background is the persistent prompting of his conscience and his hostile God.

Section V of "Launcelot and Guinevere", the last regular poem of Flagons and Apples, (a curiously appropriate title considering the menage au trois in which he found himself) is filled with bitterness towards a God whom Jeffers considers responsible for his agonizing loneliness:

V

When last we met!--how often
And often we used to meet!
But God has trampled it all
Under his feet.

God must be satisfied surely,
However much we have sinned,
With your sorrow and mine
And the wail of the wind--

God who has seen your beauty
Shine as the great stars shine,
And your hand like a stricken bird
Drop out of mine.

There is a note here of self-justification ("However much we have sinned"), a trenchant refusal to see the situation in terms of transgression and repentance. There is no denying the "sin" on Jeffers' part; he did not write "However much we may have sinned." Presumably the poet feels that the cards have been unfairly stacked against him.

But the situation dragged on. There was no impetus (after seven years!) for Jeffers to correct the situation. He seemed resigned (because of guilt-paralysis?) to being a lover from the shadows. Indeed, when finally Una confessed to her husband that, for all of them, the situation had become a hopeless impasse, it was Mr. Kuster who recommended that Una take a year away from it all in Europe to make up her mind. During that interim, Mr. Kuster fell, conveniently for Una and Robin, in love with Edith Emmons and the situation--no thanks to Jeffers--was happily resolved for them all.

The "Epilogue" to Flagons and Apples features an elegant

though unconvincing disclaimer by Robinson Jeffers. The poet blames his life, sorrows and sins upon the strange and enchanting atmosphere of California. Perhaps he is correct. One cannot easily credit his affairs as happening in his native Pittsburg, at least not the Pittsburg of 1912. A note of hope appears in the "Epilogue", the only such ray in the entire book. The immature young poet seems to take himself and his lot less seriously. The final line of the book might serve as a prophetic summary of his career. In later years "The Double Marriage of Robinson Jeffers (to his Una and to the landscape)--to borrow Lawrence Clark Powell's phrase--was to combine to create a talent unprecedented in "our country here at the west of things / ... pregnant of dreams." A substantially altered concept of his God would be one of the ground-springs of that talent.

The westward sea and the warm west wind--
It was these, not I, that wrought my rhyme.
I, that have lived, and sorrowed, and sinned,
Have spoken no word of my life as it is;
Have spoken only the ocean's abyss,
Only the open waves, that kiss,
And climb on the cliff, and fall, and climb.
Let them climb, and fall, and climb, as they will;
It is one to me, who have made what I might
Of long loves gone wrong, and light loves gone ill,
And loves of fools, forlorn and forgot,
And loves of men that witches have caught,
And loves enough, God wot; but not
The loves I have lived, nor the life I could write.

On October 11, 1916, the leading American publisher of the day, Macmillan, released to the public its printing of 1,200 copies of Californians by an unknown Carmel poet, Robinson Jeffers. The fact that Jeffers somehow managed to place his manuscript with the prestigious Macmillan company is significant. His publishers must have had faith in the book; considerable numbers of advance review copies were distributed. But like the fate of Flagons and Apples, its predecessor, Californians by Robinson Jeffers of Carmel had an indifferent reception. Jeffers himself, as before, went back to "The Homely Labors"--as one of the poems of Californians was suitably entitled.

Robinson Jeffers had much with which to occupy himself that year of 1916. Some of his intellectual energy was diverted to focus on the developments of World War One. The poet would soon occupy himself physically with the building of Tor House on what was then an isolated ocean front property on Carmel's Mission Point.

In 1916 Robinson Jeffers had done the three things he once quoted as the most important for a man: write a book, plant a tree, and father a child. In Jeffers' case though it was twins, for on November 9th, 1916, less than a month after the publishing of Californians, Una gave birth to Jeffers' only living children, twin boys, Garth and Donnan. (A daughter, Maeve, was born on May 5th, 1914, but she died one day later.) Obviously, Jeffers had enough to occupy himself that year of 1916. When it was

obvious that the Californians volume was faltering, Jeffers was content to abandon it. Never again did he consider the work in Californians to be anything but slight and unworthy verse.

But Californians is valuable to us as a transition piece, much more so than Flagons and Apples. The subject matter, the setting, some of the tone, and even a few characters of Jeffers' mature poetry are to be found in Californians. The soul of the mature verse is not. Robinson Jeffers had found the location, but not yet the form or the spirit of his meteoric Tamar and Other Poems of 1924.

The theology contained in Californians is a giant step along the developmental path to Tamar. The pantheism of Californians is more pervasive and consequential than that of Flagons and Apples, so much so that Jeffers' faith in the natural world seems to have all but eclipsed his other rudimentary beliefs. Jeffers seems fascinated with earth in Californians; he uses the word or its compounds 46 times in the book, with the word God used 38 times, seldom in its Christian connotations.

"Stephen Brown", one of the early poems in Californians, finds Jeffers admiring the serene wisdom of a hermit whose eccentric habits resemble those of Jeffers' own father. Brown, a consumptive who had been given only six months to live, came to the San Bernardino Mountains for his health and survived thirty

years. In praise of the salubriousness of Brown's surroundings, Jeffers writes towards the end of the poem: "O happy earth," I cried, "O fearless, O most holy!" The young poet is gratified that the western climate has been instrumental in extending the health of the hermit, Stephen Brown in the same manner Jeffers' own father's health was improved by a move westward.

A Ceres-like female fertility figure appears as the main character of the poem "Emilia". Present are the classic Fauns and Satyrs, vine-leaves, wine, a bountiful garden, and the poem concludes with a sensuous dance in the gentle first rain of the season, the "Bacchanalian" Emilia gingerly stepping through her garden in the nude for the occasion. Emilia prays "not with open lips, / But longingly at heart" to the powers of nature for rain for her garden. Emilia's religion (by extrapolation Jeffers') holds "to the ancient first apocalypse" whose adherents

Prayed nor to images, nor fellowships
Of Godheads on a mountain, nor withdrawn
In heaven one God nor three; but worshipped rather
Kindlier powers,--the sun, their lofty father;

18

Deep-bosomed earth, their mother; and the wind,
The rain, the sheltering hills, the moving sea:
Even so Emilia, not with conscious mind,
I think, but by deep nature, reverently
Regarded the great elements, inclined
Her heart before the first--and verily
The only visible--Gods;--and found her prayer
As often answered as most others are.

Emilia has subconscious reverence for the forces and manifestations of nature. She has rejected idol worship, priestly organ-

izations, asceticism, the monotheism of the Old Testament and the Trinity of the New. By the time Robinson Jeffers had come to write "Emilia" he too must have rejected these forms of religious practice. At minimum, Jeffers feels that Emilia's naturalistic religion is as efficacious as any other codified religion. Section 22 of "Emilia" demonstrates that her beliefs are practical. Her prayers are answered; she can see and feel the rain in her garden: in contrast to other religions "she discerned / The God of her desire." Emilia expresses her devotion to the "God of her desire" in the final four sections of the poem by dancing "free and without strain, / Mixing her tender body with the rain" as a virgin "young doe-fawn ... in a lonely clearing of the wood / For love of her own lightness." In "Emilia" Jeffers reveals the extent of his own rejection of conventional religions, providing us with a sensualized feminine practitioner of the more esoteric aspects of his own convictions.

"The Vardens" is a "Cawdor"-like narrative which features a prodigal son, Richard Varden, secretly loved by a stern father who none the less banishes him, leaving Richard's Esau-like brother Graham home to do the work. On his death bed, the boys' father cries out to his exiled son now encamped on the shores of Eagle Lake in northeastern California, far from Richard's native Santa Barbara. Jeffers distinctly rules out a conventional Christian afterlife for the soul of the departed Mr. Varden: "To annihilation and blank vacancy / Given up, the spirit was lost." But the son, by a sort of naturalistic extra sen-

sory perception, detects in his sleep the remorseful, anguished keening of his father and weeps at the tidings:

But he, (Richard Varden) that wandering man, in grief and awe
Wept silently before his lonely fire
Until pale dawn with light had slain the stars.

In "The Vardens" Robinson Jeffers discloses his disbelief in a Christian hereafter. For Jeffers, death is final. A man's spirit may wander as a ghost for a brief time, but eventually even that spirit flickers out. However, a strong spirit upon dying may be able to enlist the powers of its former abode in the natural world for a final effort at reconciling its worldly affairs. Such activity of the spirit Jeffers compares to the light of a recently extinguished star:

As when a star is blackened, yet its light
Rains on the earth for centuries to come
From the incalculable gulf and vast of heaven.

It is only a matter of time and perspective which allows the spirit briefly to wander over the earth before "the great world that knew it not / Was emptied of a soul." The world which sustained old Mr. Varden was not even aware of his passing. It may be a man's felicity to take joy in the beauties of nature, but the felicity is not reciprocal.

Another poem which states Jeffers' view of a beautiful "but unresponsive Nature" is "Maldrove", the story of a brilliantly gifted young poet named Maldrove who stayed at Peter Graham's hermit cabin and left behind a poetic fragment before

he (a casualty of World War One)

Fell in a skirmish by the Dardanelles
(A special British blunder, God forgive them!).

Maldrove's (Jeffers') poetic invocation is a passionate piece
of pantheism:

Mother-country, O beautiful beyond
All power of passionate verse, or dream of mine,
Yet take this homeless verse; for it is thine

and so on. After Peter Graham allows the young Jeffers to read
the treasured fragment of Maldrove's fleeting sojourn, Graham
concludes:

Only--this world--what is there in it to love
But unresponsive Nature?

Much later in his career Jeffers will clarify his position: it
is man's felicity to love the natural world which is beautiful
throughout, but such a world neither notices nor needs man's
devotion.

The old hermit Peter Graham makes another statement which
might well serve as a concise epigram for Jeffers' efforts in
Californians:

--He was then
Not old enough to clarify his dreams
Into a human image.

In "The The Three Avilas" Jeffers touches on his familiar
theme of incest for the first time. Of all the poems in Califor-

nians, "The Three Avilas" provides the most palpable link to the romantic dilemma of Flagons and Apples. The theological difficulties of Flagons and Apples surface again in "The Three Avilas". The poem, which tells the imagined story of an incestuous brother and sister--at first unaware of their parentage--and their ultimately successful avenging brother, is deeply evocative of Jeffers' extraordinary courtship and its thorny obstacles. The narrative poem is highly biographical in nature as Jeffers writes in the prose explanation, A Note about Places, as the conclusion of the volume: "The story of the three Avilas, for example, grew up (as many of his future poetic narratives would) like a plant from the ravine described in it", a ravine at which Robin and Una would rest on their way home to their way home to their residence at the time, The Log Cabin, still standing at Fifth and Monte Verde streets in Carmel.

In "The Three Avilas"--as in Flagons and Apples--Robinson Jeffers writes of "jealous Gods". Jeffers characterizes these Gods as fickle and prone to influence:

Then think--for if we ponder long enough
On omens when the Gods are very good
It may be they'll avert them

"The Three Avilas" is replete with demons, fiends, and "phantoms that flock here about our bed." In reaction to "lamentable demon shriek(s)" Jeffers even "hang(s) my (his) holstered weapon ere we sleep." In Californians, as in his previous verse, numerous reference is made to other-worldly vengeance-seeking creatures.

When the avenging Avila Brother is about to catch up with the two incestuous lovers from Mexico, Jeffers introduces the misinterpretation that it was Christianity which forces their "bloodhound" brother to seek their deaths: "both family pride / And Christian faith commanded fratricide." A fascinating psychological relationship exists in the chasm between Jeffers' adulterous love affair with Una with its concomitant guilt feelings and Jeffers' early rejection of Christianity as a faith which he felt assessed his conduct as iniquitous. In the instance of the vengeful Avila brother, Jeffers is consciously or subconsciously conveniently misinterpreting the dictates of Christianity for his own ends.

In Robinson Jeffers' view, the incestuous Avila brother (as Jeffers surrogate) is "more loved than the Lord Christ, and more unblest." True lovers here on earth receive a greater love than Christ himself and as a consequence are rewarded with an even crueller Calvary. When the avenging brother takes aim and kills his sister, Jeffers uses the occasion to "prove" that

...no God cares for what may be
Of horrible, or out of reason done
Below the foolish looks of the wide sun!

Twisted logic and false excuses are still beclouding the facts surrounding Jeffers' courtship.

In the light of Jeffers' later work, Biblical reference in Californians is notably sparse. Significantly however, Robinson

Jeffers includes a comparison of the surviving Avila brother covering his slain brother and sister's nakedness with a serape on Carmel Beach with the account in Genesis 9:20-27 wherein

...Noah's praiseworthy two sons
Walked backward toward their father drunk-asleep
And naked

and covered their father.

Jeffers concludes "The Three Avilas" reiterating that "to love well is to contend / With Gods vengeful and envious." Self-disenfranchised from the religion of his father, Jeffers in the final section of the narrative turns to things natural as a balm and consolation:

But as for us, let us forget to fear,
Some brief permitted while, those vengeance.
The woods and shore yet shelter us; and here
Where the world ends in waves and silences
We may be quite as joyful as the clear
Small blossoms of the beach and wilderness;
Those lamps whose light is perfume, which they scatter
Profuse on the wide air and the pale water.

"The Mill Creek Farm" of Californians bears remarkable resemblance to Robert Frost's "Two Witches, Part I, The Witch of Coös" which appeared in his New Hampshire volume of 1923. Both poems deal with strong-willed country women, contain their share of gallows humor, and concern themselves with death. (This is by no means the only parallel which exists between Frost and Jeffers; a valid study could be made on the correspondences between the two poet's lives and work.) Jeffers' poem is the

heavier of the two, however. With the aged widow on her death-bed, Robinson Jeffers has her voice the following sentiments concerning the pointlessness of a heaven:

... What's that?--In heaven?--
A place for children to plan for; I'm eighty-seven.
You'll know, when you get to be tired and sleepy and white,
That the only word at the end is plain Good-night.

Like Stephen Brown, the widow of Mill Creek Farm considers subsequent generations soft; she dies more content listening to "the noise of the stream" than to the imagined sounds of her dead son's voice. Jeffers once again prefers the natural world to a religious or spirit world of the hereafter. Robert Frost putting it more gently said:

... Earth's the right place for love:
I don't know where it's likely to go better.

In 1952 Robinson Jeffers wrote a descriptive, historic prose summary of Point Lobos for Doubleday & Company's The Glory of Our West. But the first of Jeffers' numerous and eloquent canticles of that "most beautiful union of water and earth" appears as "A Westward Beach" in Californians. On what was already in 1916 obviously hallowed ground to him, Robinson Jeffers makes firm his vow to remain unshaken a pantheist:

I promise you, serene and great
Ocean, and Earth, my mother,
In days well-friended, fortunate,
My spirit will not be other
Than now it is:--I have fared not ill;
I have known joy: yet keep my will
Austere and unsubduable!

It was a vow Jeffers was to keep for his remaining 56 years--
"in days well-friended" and in ill.

A close reading of "A Westward Beach" reveals that Jeffers in 1916 was not "a hater of men". His view is that the natural world of beauty is capable of accepting even man and his "dull / And outcast and unusable" discards. Ultimately Jeffers' faith has it that the earth is inviolable--even at the hands of man, who can damage, but never completely destroy the natural world.

Dear Earth, thou art so beautiful!
Lo, thou acceptest all things dull
And outcast and unusable;

Thou takest home and makest whole
The relics and discarded
Raiment of man; each toy or tool
By him no more regarded
To thee is dear, and grows to thee,
And finds acceptance full and free,
Even with the old hills and the sea.

In "A Westward Beach" Robinson Jeffers looks ahead to a double career as poet and prophet. In this double capacity his mission will be to plead with, cry to, or rage at humanity to return home to a more natural life in the company of "the brown hills and the blue sky."

Meanwhile, my voice may reach so far
As to your ears, and waken
Some spark within you, the one star
Your chimneys could not blacken;
And I will plead and I will cry,
And rage at you, and pass you by,
And wander under the open sky.

Robinson Jeffers' theological position is summed up with the title for one of the poems from Californians: "He Has Fallen

in Love with the Mountains".

In a commemorative poem entitled "The Year of Mourning" Robinson Jeffers writes of the deaths in the same year of his father and his first child, Maev. If anything could have acted to restore Jeffers' Christian faith, it would have been the death of his theologian father. Instead, Jeffers rejects the theology which even his father had had difficulties with. The elder Jeffers had traveled to

The Palestinian hills where that began
Which like strong poison in the sickly world
Works yet for evil and good: medicinal
And deadly

Christianity for Jeffers is a mixture of good and evil, a mixed blessing for the world. There is a hint, however, that Jeffers has not altogether dismissed an omnipotent God who presides over nature. He writes that the "lordly oaks and pines of mine own shore" are "stern; / And of their natures next to supreme God."

In section IX, the seance section of "The Year of Mourning," Jeffers provides his early explanation of the origin of the Gods.

Our baser part of consciousness flows over,
And mocks us from without. Thence Gods were made.

Apparently the Gods are imagined from man's subconscious needs; man projects the Gods from deep within his psyche. The embodiment and separation from man of such deities works for man's discomfiture.

Section X of the above poem is obviously the forerunner of Jeffers' monumental poem "Night" which first appeared in Roan Stallion and Other Poems, 1925. The vision is monistic, "the Protean element" (darkness) creates all things and eventually reclaims them unto itself. The stars themselves are born from and return to

...that one gulf
Obscurest; that alone
Beyond their witness opens a night
Awful, discrowned of stars, naked of light.

Jeffers characterizes a second existence for man as a physical impossibility:

O fools are we! who cherish
Long loves in such a travelling world, who thirst
For that which the stars know not, which the Gods
Have not: were feigned to have:
That blossom rooted in the bottomless grave,
The impossible dawning of that second morn.

A resurrection from the dead is "impossible." The finality of his father's death renders undue mourning merely a form of self-indulgence:

Yet he for all thy weeping, all thy love,
All thy long weeping, will not wake again.

He is gone down where Fate and adverse Gods
Trample all things great, all honored things....

The double deaths of 1914 in the Jeffers family did not leave the poet without consolation. In the final and perhaps best poem of Californians, "Ode on Human Destinies"--one of the few poems from the volume reprinted in Jeffers' lifetime--

Jeffers, like the writer of Psalm 121:1, lifts up his "eyes unto the hills":

I lifted up my eyes and heart, to adore
The inveterate stability of things.

Guiding the "inveterate stability" of the universe is the omniscient God, Fate. Jeffers advises that a human

...neither tremble, neither falter
In the course he cannot alter;
Each walks a way long chosen, long before;
That path as well as this
In surest guidance is;
Fate, that alone is God, can change no more
Than the strong traveller may control,
His necessary courses toward the timeless goal.

The great God of the universe is Fate; in section VII of "Ode on Human Destinies" Jeffers adds that the Holy Spirit and hallmark of such a God is the eternal beauty of the physical world. This universal beauty is "from eternity". The stars, the human spirit, the swallows are all fuel to the great flame of the beauty of the universe. Such a deity commands and deserves our allegiance:

...No mean lord
We serve and share with, serving thee,
O twin-born bride of Destiny!

Jeffers, his future already known to Fate and predetermined, ends his second book, Californians, with the firm resolution to be guided and inspired throughout his life by Beauty, the holy spirit of Fate:

I, driven ahead on undiscovered ways
Yet predetermined, do not fail to see,
Over the fog and dust of dream and deed,
The holy spirit, Beauty, beckoning me.

The Early Years: God

A Summary

Robinson Jeffers' early works (his juvenilia, college verse, and first two unsuccessful books) are largely inconsequential as poetry. The juvenilia and college verse (virtually indistinguishable from each other since Jeffers entered college at an early age) already reveal the young poet's disenchantment with the Protestant Christianity of his upbringing. The earliest extant verse is revealingly concerned with extra-Christian pursuits and naturalistic attitudes.

The quality of the verse of Flagons and Apples is even less (and more limited in scope) than Jeffers' juvenilia. Jeffers' guilt, derived from his unusual romantic circumstances, drives him even further from the conventional Christianity of his day. A growing sense of retribution at the hands of a deity finds Robinson Jeffers engrafting a deity of vengeance-seeking proportions to his budding pantheism.

Robinson Jeffers' second book, Californians of 1916, was by far the best poetry he had written to date. The verse is disciplined, often stylistically indebted to Dante and Milton,

and, more importantly, contains the initia of many of Jeffers' mature works. Californians (in this light) seems a vastly underrated book. Jeffers' deity has become unabashedly and permanently pantheistic. An exhaustive study of Jeffers' theology as revealed in Californians should some day be done after the sequence of composition of the works of the volume is ascertained, Californians obviously containing works of a distant and more recent composition.

Theologically Californians is a vital exercise in definition of Jeffers' conception of God. The observations of the natural world Jeffers made in the years prior to the publication of the book were a lasting and abundant source of inspiration throughout his lifetime. After foraging through a series of pantheistic possibilities, Jeffers concludes that the world is monistic, that the single great force of the universe is Fate. Beauty is the signature of this immense power on the world. Jeffers himself had still to experience this power in order to be transformed into a poet of lasting merit.

To the point of the publication of Californians and for perhaps a few years thereafter Jeffers was only consciously working out the definition of what he considered to be the God of the universe. Before he could write meaningfully about his investigations, he would somehow (probably through a direct mystical encounter of his own) have to experience the reality of such a God. How this came about we shall probably never know.

The likelihood of confirmatory evidence for mystical experience being what it is, Californians remains our best index to the developing thought of a poet of genius.

The Early Years (1887-1923): Man

Expressions of Robinson Jeffers' attitudes towards his fellow man are not as abundant in his early works as are his theological persuasions. Jeffers once pointed out that his parents "carried me about Europe a great deal" as a child. The boy never attended the same Swiss school for two years in succession. While in Europe, Robinson Jeffers observed that his European counterparts were not as clean or as upright in character as he would have liked them to be. At an early age Jeffers probably formed attitudes of suspicion towards classmates he lacked the time to learn to know.

Jeffers' father's own eccentricities also made an indelible impression on the young lad. From his father's Calvinistic faith Jeffers learned that man ought to be humble before his Creator. "The Measure", printed in Occidental College's The Aurora in December, 1903, is Jeffers' first surviving poem which provides a clue as to his early attitudes towards man. Jeffers was sixteen at the time, and already was placing humanity in perspective:

And those, her (the earth's) progeny, the mighty men,
Swaying her things in comradeship with fate,
Seem but as worms upon a little clod.

In relationship to the universe, man and his planet earth are insignificant indeed. Behind this characteristic Jeffers' pronouncement is the attitude that man, powerful and influential

though he may be, cannot exceed the bounds which "Space, Eternity and God" have set for him.

The next month The Aurora featured a poem by Robinson Jeffers with a telling title: "Man's Pride". Reminiscent of Job 40:12 which warns man of excessive self-confidence, the poem begins:

What is man that he should be proud?
And what is the race of men
That they should think high things?

The youthful Jeffers castigates what he considers to be the vanity of human self-consciousness. Humility in place of arrogance is prescribed for the human race, then at the beginning of the twentieth century with all its significant discoveries. It was a message Jeffers would later reiterate with immeasurably greater skill, but with about as much real impact as in his youth.

A February 1904 offering, "A Hill-top View", concludes: "The calm eternal Truth would keep us meek"--if man could seek and understand the limitations of his existence from the whole-some perspective of cosmic distance.

Robinson Jeffers' only published short story, "Mirrors", appeared in The Smart Set magazine in August of 1913, just one year before the outbreak of World War One. It is a curious piece which features a nervously introspective young man named Adair who comes to realize that "we are all mirrors--senseless

mirrors--blank spaces which reflect." By implication, human self-consciousness (with no antidote from the purgative external natural world) will ultimately turn in on itself, the results of which are bizarre and unhealthy.

In an unpublished poem dated 1907, "North Pole", Robinson Jeffers predicts the conquering of the North Pole, which--in personification--laments that man one day will indeed subdue the earth.

For the thing ye (man) decide
To do, in the end,
Not time, not tide,
Can avail to withstand.
For I know ye are masters,
Who cease not to dare,
Whom never disasters
Can bring to despair.

Perhaps the young Robinson Jeffers had caught a bit of the contemporary optimistic fever of the triumph, through technology, of man over his surroundings. The poet seems to have mixed feelings about such a triumph.

Because of the limited scope of Jeffers' first book, Flagons and Apples, one neither expects nor finds many sweeping pronouncements by the amorous young poet on the nature or condition of man. Perhaps the only overt and significant reference to the human race comes in the book's "Epilogue". There Jeffers admits that he has known and loved foolish people. Perhaps the young versifier has learned not to give of himself to the unworthy of his world. Clearly the writer has intentions of being more

discretionary with his affections in the future.

The publication in 1916 of Californians provides some concrete insight into Jeffers' true feelings concerning man and society. References to God outnumber those to man in the volume, but we are able to obtain a reasonable picture of Jeffers' attitudes toward man from his second book of verse.

The first time Jeffers touches upon human freedom in a poem, he refers to his remote ancestors who migrated "Westward, free wanderers." Robinson Jeffers views himself as "the latest" of the millions who "tracked westward the wilderness." The quest for individual liberty remains one of Jeffers' most characteristic poetic appeals.

In "Stephen Brown", one of several hermit poems of Californians, we find a grain of another favorite theme of Jeffers', the necessity of one's having--insofar as one is able--beautiful surroundings. People become what their non-human environment allows them to become. If one's surroundings are beautiful and natural, then Jeffers surmises such an environment will have its impact on the individual. In the words of Stephen Brown: "We grow to be what we have loved." The conclusion of the poem seems to suggest a tangible link between the natural environment and the individual it supports. Jeffers admires individual men at peace with their chosen surroundings. The self-reliance and independence of a man like Stephen Brown, Jeffers would claim,

indicate that true freedom has its birth in the open air:

A man at home in the world to live or die,
Self-stationed, self-upheld as the all-beholding sky.

But most men do not choose to live as does Stephen Brown. Peter Graham, another hermit of Californians who appears in the poem "Maldrove", expresses his contempt for the human situation of the day. In a little less than a decade, Jeffers himself will have the capability to voice his own discontent with man more directly. But for the moment Jeffers describes his Peter Graham as

A jovial hermit, who professes more
Than feels contempt of man and of the time.

But Maldrove, hypothetical talented young poet and Jeffers' doppelgänger writes more openly, declaring that, although people will call themselves lords of the earth at the forthcoming World Fair, "I on hell.... attest I love them (the people) little, but thee (the earth) well." The young poet Maldrove later refers to "all the vermin infamies of men, / The many foulnesses" summing up his intense dislike for the many evils man seems inclined to commit.

In his early school years Robinson Jeffers was known as the "little Spartan." Peter Graham concludes "Maldrove" with the most characteristic Jeffersian summation of society present in Californians. Although the words are those of Jeffers' hermit friend, we may be certain--in the light of Jeffers' later caustic

comments on a luxury and comfort oriented American society--
that the young Jeffers found himself very much in accord with
Graham's judgments:

This cankered (human) world, what is there in it to love?
A world at war is well enough--but this,
Rotting in peace--commerce--and for a hope
What but the socialism we're settling to,
Quotidian Sunday chicken, and free love
High over all, the spirit of hugger-mugger,
And cosmopolitan philanthropy
With wide wings waving blessing

What then, in Jeffers' view, is the best form of human
society? Not the massed dependencies of modern urban civili-
zation, but the harsh realities and isolated pastoral beauties
of

...several farms, weak inroads of few men
Amid the imperturbable majesty
Of the old forest

similar to the setting of "Ruth Alison." The Jeffers of Calif-
ornians has neither respect for nor interest in massed humanity.

A million lives like these riot and mix
About the world, and none keeps record of them.
So on a mountain-flank the rainy grass
Is new in January and lost in June,
And none keeps record of it: the blind hearts
Of men likewise renew themselves and die.

In later poems Robinson Jeffers often will recoin the comparison
of humanity in the mass with "all the companies of windy grasses."
Ruth Alison, an individual who cannot fit into the crowd, finds
herself betrayed and destroyed by it.

"At Lindsay's Cabin" provides further evidence of Jeffers' early, intense dislike for crowds. Lindsay, "a solitary man" with an unfortunate penchant for strong alcohol when exposed to the masses of San Francisco, is shanghied while on a necessary visit to the metropolis. The city's throngs are termed by Jeffers

...multitudes

They moved the streets, an endless aimless throng,
As in a broken anthill scurry the ants,
And seem to have no aim, but everywhere
In multitudinous confusion mingled
Stream through the little, close, and earth ways:
Even thus they swarm the city, and Lindsay felt
That none among so many destinies
Could be of moment, seeing so many there were,
So mixed and all-inextricable.

And in the evening Jeffers' metaphor of city inhabitants and habits becomes even less complimentary:

An endless aimless glitter: then indeed
The fancy grew more strange, the crowd was merged
Into one being unformable and huge,
A monster of convulsive breath, a life
Alien to man through all composed of men,
Unfriendly, menacing, fearfully alive.

.....

...Lindsay groaned

To be back yonder where the rivers run,
And men are few,--thence individual souls,
And often like the hills in dignity.

When Lindsay awakens aboard ship and discovers that his two year involuntary impressment is legal and binding, we find Jeffers stating for the first time the fundamental Saxon pre-Christian advice of his ancestors:

Strength to desire the best, and strength to endure
Albeit the worst: these both are in man's heart
Borne:--happy is he who but the first of these
Knows and requires: and yet not miserable,
Not wholly miserable must he be named
Whom the other and sadder power supports.

The happiest individual is he who has the strength to direct his own affairs; but a man who is able to endure the worst the world may hurl at him will not be altogether discomfited. The key words and ideas are, of course, strength and endurance. For the first time in verse Robinson Jeffers endorses these rock-solid, ancestral principles. Throughout his career, Jeffers will make continual reference to the ancient Saxon codes of conduct; his prosody is markedly influenced by the powerful techniques of the Old English bards. Jeffers' study at the graduate level of the Old English masterpieces has obviously had a deep impact on his life and literary style. It is, therefore, astonishing that no thorough study has ever been made of this fundamental force in Robinson Jeffers' poetry.

After two years' absence, Lindsay, like a persevering Saxon, returns to his beloved cabin in the Big Sur. Five years more and he is dead. Jeffers sums up Lindsay's life (and his poem) with the thought that neither usefulness nor importance to man is the criterion by which to judge a living creature. Another fundamental Jeffersian observation is also present: in the vast cosmos, man is nowhere near as important as he thinks himself to be. "What is humanity in this cosmos?" Jeffers will ask in "Roan Stallion". What is important for a human is not so

much his interrelationship with his fellows but his outward-directed love of the splendors of the natural world around him:

I think his life was largely fortunate.
Useless, you say? Man, what is man to judge
Of use and disuse? Are the weeds that grow
Deep in the dark abysms of the eyeless wave,
Yielding the fish no pasture,--are the flowers
No wildbird ever saw, so buried they are
In deep green hollows of the ancient wood--
Are therefore these unuseful?--Man to man
Being helpful is of worth, yet man to man
Is not the whole--perhaps is the least part
Of the infinite interrelation of all being.
This man, (Lindsay) as others love a woman, he
His chosen valley. Look! For I believe
His love hath made it the more beautiful.

The conclusion of "The Mill Creek Farm" combines Robinson Jeffers' already characteristic dislike of cities with one of his first prophetic utterances. The dying old widow of the farm foresees a dim future for a nation which recklessly sends its strong young men to the city to earn their livelihoods in a characterless manner:

Queer that a man's four boys must die, and the land
Fall from their father's into a stranger's hand!
I thought of that when I visited you in town,
Katie, and saw the people run up and down,
Trotting the streets; and young fellows busy with work
Not fit for a man to put hand to: waiter and clerk,
Poolroom loafer and barroom lapper: I thought,
Will the blessed country end like me, be caught
At the break-up time, when the world turns upside down,
With her sons all gone and rotted away in town?
Not a man with strength to keep hold of the beautiful land,
And the stranger's hulls off-shore, and the stranger's hand
Reaching up to the mountains.

A damnable dream

To go to sleep with.

When one considers the urban difficulties confronting contemporary America and the omnipresent Russian "fishing fleets" a

few miles westward from the Monterey Peninsula, Jeffers' predictions seem nervously appropriate.

The brief narrative poem "The Belled Doe" concludes with additional advice from Jeffers to the chiefs of men:

...but yet,
Brief rulers, I would have you not forget
The old dignity of him that drives the plow
Through crumbling furrows deep, when morning's brow
Flames in the orient world; and him that broods
Memory of an old love under simple woods.

Jeffers in Californians is already concerned with the permanent and enduring occupations of men. These pursuits have an "old dignity" which the newer necessarily citified occupations lack.

In "A Westward Beach" Robinson Jeffers unequivocally states--for the first time--his preference for cliffs, pines, waves, and birds rather than "human chatter":

How do I love these voices more,
These cries remote, inhuman,
These echoes of the lonely shore,
Than words of man and woman?

But feeling a tug of humanity, Jeffers realizes that man, undesirable though he may be, cannot be entirely ignored:

Alas, it is not well with me:--
Can man wash off humanity
And wed the unmarriageable sea?

The Robinson Jeffers of Californians cannot yet state that he is "quits with the people." Instead, "A Westward Beach" con-

cludes with a romantic appeal for his brethren to follow the poet's lead and unshackle themselves from their impure urbanized existences:

O men, my brothers! even you
She (nature) would accept, unfetter.

Never again would Jeffers refer to men as his "brothers." From Tamar forward, Robinson Jeffers would realize that such appeals are shallowly rhetorical. The pleading tones of "A Westward Beach" would later coalesce to more somber predictions and warnings for the human race.

This mood of increasing pessimism in regard to the human race and its "accomplishments" is already in evidence in one of the final poems of Californians, "Dream of the Future (To U. J.)". The poem is dedicated to Jeffers' wife Una and optimistically predicts interstellar human colonization. But the poem also reflects Jeffers' sense of foreboding regarding the inevitable human domination of the biosphere. Jeffers asks the "men of the future" to spare the trees of his beloved region. Years later Robinson Jeffers would more pessimistically (and realistically, as it turned out) write: "Fire and the axe are devils." Regarding the human-dominated future Jeffers states:

I am ill content, I fear the too-greatness of man.
Not uncorrupted the conqueror. Much is lost
When the tame horse runs to the bridle, or the maid to the
kiss.

"Ode on Human Destinies", the final poem of Californians, has man locked into his fate and future:

IV

Nothing of man's is strange to man:
Who of old the course began
Runs the course: he finishes.

.

Man will change not, though all Gods
Utterly change.

Jeffers predicts eventual extinction for man:

Death, O Man, will reap at last
All the heritage thou hast.

Later in "Ode on Human Destinies" Robinson Jeffers plainly
repeats the inevitability of man's demise:

...death will lay
A finger on the race of man.

The role that man is to play in the universe is fixed in
advance:

Let (man) neither tremble, neither falter
In the course he cannot alter;
Each walks a way long chosen, long before;
That path as well as this
In surest guidance is;
Fate, that alone is God, can change no more
Than the strong traveller my control
His necessary courses toward the timeless goal.

Man's consolation in such a cosmos is not a false and fleeting
feeling of superiority, but the deep repose of knowing that he
is a minute but integral part of the great design:

...what he (man) wills
Is part and substance of the immense design:
He is beautiful and great,
Being work and will, being child and slave, of constant Fate.

The Early Years: Man

A Summary

It comes to no surprise that references to man in Jeffers' early works are far less numerous than his many references to God. His upbringing and schooling, after all, were more theological than social in nature. Robinson Jeffers' background, by no means limited or limiting, enabled him to take the long dispassionate view of mankind so necessary in a major poet's early years. As a young man, Jeffers traveled widely in Europe, spending his boyhood years in private Swiss schools. During this time John Robinson Jeffers must have been exposed to a broad range of human beings. He returned to the United States to attend a college and two universities, all three of which enjoyed a high scholastic reputation and in which Jeffers excelled as a student.

Robinson Jeffers inherited his father's dislike for unnecessary socializing; the young poet made few but lasting friendships. Jeffers, however, gladly obliged when the opportunity arose to have a few of his exploratory poems printed. College periodicals apparently were pleased to feature his verses. The printing of Flagons and Apples, Robinson Jeffers' first book, was largely a fortuitous venture. The young and love-stricken poet had as yet no comprehensive world view to set down, only a vague wish to be published for once in his life, somewhere. Under these circumstances, it is unrealistic to expect

in these early verses a grand overview of the human condition.

And yet some early evidence of Jeffers' world-view does crop up in his juvenilia. The virtues and values of solitude are present in "The Condor". Elements of Jeffers' admiration for courage are to be found in "The Wild Hunt". There are also intimations of Robinson Jeffers' somber warnings to a self-satisfied human race as, for example, in "Man's Pride". Not until the publication of Californians, however, do we have evidence of Jeffers being forced by his surroundings categorically to assess other human beings. Previously, the poet had been able to relocate when the human scene had become for him uninviting. Faced with family responsibilities and having found his "inevitable place" in Carmel, Jeffers was forced to take a stand over against the human race. With his free sense of movement restricted by his new situation, Jeffers took to writing about his fellow man in the abstract and dignified mode of narrative poetry. Well over half the Californians volume is devoted to narrative poems which feature a detached view of Jeffers' contemporaries.

Besides these narratives, Jeffers designates a second poetic form found in Californians as "descriptive songs". These poems generally register a personal reaction to the natural phenomena of Jeffers' new-found region. For the most part, they are the forerunners of Jeffers' lyrics which tail-ended his many volumes of verse--just as the briefer narrative poems of Califor-

nians foreshadow the lengthy "stories" of Jeffers' mature work.

In Californians one senses a strain in Jeffers' choice of poetic genre. Should he write of his intensely personal relations to the natural splendors around him and end up appealing to the small audience who had also explored and similarly appreciated these natural wonders? This was the experience of George Sterling, the California poet who was Carmel's chief singer before Jeffers' arrival in 1914. Because of these self-limitations, Sterling's verse sustained only a localized audience. Or should Jeffers write poetic narratives of present day life and affairs, gain an audience now and ultimately lose it as times changed? This later course was no doubt the less desirable to Robinson Jeffers who already preferred things natural to things human.

This tension in Californians is not resolved, for the book includes poetic narratives, personalized odes, and verse of an intimate and biographical nature. How was Jeffers to write of human beings when creeks and canyons, stars and the sea were really his overpowering concerns? It was a dilemma which Jeffers only began to solve in Californians. Contemporary, individual man, present and drawn from life, working in the enduring occupations could be universalized and distilled so that stories written about such people would have more than local interest value. The narrative poems of Californians often deal with just such people, abstracted, isolated, fiercely defiant of urbanized

society--and highly representative of what Jeffers felt was the best way for a human being to live on this planet. Quite often the values of the characters in Californians are the thinly disguised values of their creator.

What human values does Robinson Jeffers endorse in Californians? Jeffers opts for an uncluttered, uncrowded society, much open space, a hard but rewarding life, and--by implication--responsible individual liberty. Already Robinson Jeffers roundly rejects city living as unreal and depersonalizing. He rejects the exploitation of nature showing in "Ruth Alison" the tragic ends of those who do seek to plunder the land and its resources. Jeffers rejects the soft utopia of socialism while admitting its glittering appeal and nefarious, inevitable growth.

Thus stated, Robinson Jeffers' limited prescription for society appears bucolically reactionary, but beyond the romanticization of rural California life Jeffers provides a wider-ranging vision of the human future. Nowhere in Californians does Jeffers recommend the spartan country life for all human beings. Jeffers seems resigned--prepared even--to accept the changes and confusion the future must bring. In Californians Robinson Jeffers foresees a radically altered future including space travel; he even predicts the human harnessing of the energy of the solar system. As a chilling, cautionary note, he also writes of the eventual extinction of the human race.

This side of such a fate, Jeffers would have man realize (as he writes in "Dream of the Future") that human beings are only one small facet to a wondrously intact universe, a message the poet will incubate for eight crucial years until its full effulgence in Tamar.

The Middle Years (1924-1940): God

The advertisement in the book section of The New York Times Sunday edition promised quality printing of author's manuscripts. The reader of the ad in Carmel was Robinson Jeffers. The time was quite early in 1924. Nothing was promised about publishing.

After the disappointment of Californians, Robinson Jeffers had set about the concerns of being a father and homeowner. As Tor House gradually became furnished, Una, who had carefully noted her husband's new-found interest in stonemasonry, cast about for another project in stone for her husband's hands. They both agreed upon a tower by the sea, something perhaps to remind them of the ancient Irish round towers. Jeffers spent four years at the task, rolling unassisted the granite boulders for the tower from the beach, then setting them in place with the aid of a crude winch. Many of the thoughts of those four laborious years were infused into a group of poems which Jeffers--this time in vain--tried to have published. Macmillan must have refused this batch, and other rejection slips found their way to the new stone house on Scenic Road, Carmel.

But this time the writer of the verses was convinced as to their quality, originality, and substance. Disgusted with publishers, Jeffers resorted to what he had done in the past;

he wrote to Peter G. Boyle (whose ad had appeared in The New York Times) as he had contacted the Grafton Publishing Company of Los Angeles in 1912. Boyle, highly enthusiastic upon reading the manuscript sent him, suggested a printing of 1,000 copies. His past experience in mind, Jeffers (who would be paying for the printing) settled for 500.

Though not a publisher, Boyle did his best to interest others in a work of which he personally thought highly. No one else, however, seemed interested. The newly completed attic on Scenic Road soon became the grand repository of a coffin-sized case of books (recently shipped from New York) by Robinson Jeffers, all of them entitled Tamar and Other Poems. But three's the charm, and James Rorty took several copies east with him--to the right places it turned out--and soon Jeffers was being dubbed the poetic discovery of the decade. The attic was emptied of its case. Returned to New York, the city of its birth, the edition of Tamar soon sold out. Boyle--generous as before--suggested Jeffers place the manuscript and whatever other verse he had written in the interim with a more established publisher. A leading avant garde publisher, Boni & Liveright of New York, eagerly agreed on a reissue of Tamar.

The middle of the Twenties, 1925, saw two fine new works offered under the Boni & Liveright imprint: Theodore Dreiser's monumental An American Tragedy, and the sensational Roan Stallion, Tamar and Other Poems by a new poet scarcely anyone knew, Robinson Jeffers of Carmel. The age of bath-tub gin and Paul Whiteman

soaked up the twelve reprintings of the book, four of which were completed in the first year of the serendipitous volume which reprinted all of the contents of Tamar plus nineteen new poems by Jeffers.

Theologically, there was much which was puzzling to the supposedly unshockable readers of Roan Stallion in the mid-1920's. What to do with the commercial-like message which broke into the very midst of the "Roan Stallion" narrative?:

... not in a man's shape
He approves the praise, he (God) that walks lightning-naked
on the
Pacific, that laces the suns with planets,
The heart of the atom with electrons: what is humanity in
this
cosmos? For him, the last
Least taint of a trace in the dregs of the solution; for
itself
the mold to break away from, the coal
To break into fire, the atom to be split

Robinson Jeffers of course was saying something of what he had said in Californians--but this time with authority, power, and conviction. The God of the Roan Stallion book was no insubstantial figment of the hyper-immaginative poetic mind. Jeffers' vision of God in Roan Stallion was titanically energetic and vast, two of the qualities of the poems themselves. In retrospect, we can only assume that the quality of Jeffers' emphatic new poetic efforts stemmed directly from his mystical encounter with that deity some time prior to the penning of Tamar.

The long narrative poems are beyond the scope of this study, but one aspect of Jeffers' concept of God is prominent in "Roan

Stallion": the deity of the poem is lord of the universe, a universe which includes the newly discovered scientific principles of the day. The shorter poems of the volume are also often unabashedly theological. In "Gale in April", for example, Jeffers contends that the beauty of the world goes on quite independently of a man's or of man's existence:

O beauty of things go on, go on, O torture
Of intense joy I have lasted out my time, I have thanked God
and finished

One of the early poems Jeffers saw fit to include in Tamar of 1924 was his often anthologized sonnet "To His Father". Again Robinson Jeffers serves notice of his rejection of Christianity:

Christ was your lord and captain all your life,
He fails the world but you he did not fail,

.....

I Father having followed other guides
And oftener to my hurt no leader at all

Here Jeffers records his respect for Christ as his father's inspiration, but Jeffers himself cannot accept his father's "captain." The last two lines quoted from "To His Father" indicate that the poem was written at an early date, probably shortly after the publication of Californians (since it was not included there)--or perhaps upon the death of his father--at a time when Jeffers was following other misleading "captains," not as yet having encountered the Presence so pervasive in poems of the Tamar volume.

There is, however, evidence even in Tamar that Jeffers was still considering and eliminating the major religions of the world. The finest poem on a purely theological topic in Tamar is "Point Pinos and Point Lobos". Both promontories were visible from Jeffers' newly constructed Hawk Tower, Pinos to the north and Lobos to the south. Together these two magnificent landmarks framed Jeffers' physical world. Spread between them were the emerald waters of Carmel Bay. The Spaniards had been the name-givers: Point Pinos for the tortured grove of Monterey pines which grew there, and Point Lobos for the "wolves"--actually sea-lions--which frequented the rocky outcroppings of the Point Lobos peninsula.

In his poem "Point Pinos and Point Lobos" Robinson Jeffers ascribes added significance to these promontories. The poem exists in three sections: section one focuses on Point Pinos and is only slightly longer than the second section on Point Lobos. The third division of the poem is a succinct estimation of the two major religions of the world, Christianity and Buddhism.

Point Pinos with its twisted contortions of trees and its tenebrous graveyard impressed Jeffers as a likely location for a second appearance of Christ in the western world. Jeffers imagines Christ wandering the forest and sorrowfully asks

Which tortured trunk will you choose, Lord, to be hewn to a cross?

In contrast to the northern and European appearance of Point Pinos, Point Lobos is decidedly eastern and Oriental in aspect. In his prose selection from The Glory of Our West, Robinson Jeffers records his first impressions of Point Lobos:

(The Monterey cypress) look immensely old, desolate and enduring, like the ancient trees that Chinese artists love.

And the granite cliffs that they grow on are like the rocks in a Chinese landscape-painting. That was my impression of Point Lobos when I first saw it--that it was Oriental, it did not belong to this country, but must have drifted, like a ship across the Pacific, from the headlands of Asia.

Absorbed with the eastern atmosphere of Point Lobos, Jeffers contemplates the Buddha, "Serenely smiling / Face of the godlike man made God"

Jeffers' views on Christianity and Buddhism are dynamically and accurately recorded in "Point Pinos and Point Lobos", views which would not alter substantially in the future. At the outset, Jeffers clarifies his personal position in regard to the two religions; he writes out of respect for Christ and Buddha. Jeffers does not sneer at Christ:

I am not among the mockers Master, I am one of your
lovers

As well, Jeffers expresses his admiration for Buddha's ability to transcend the agonies of existence, to achieve Buddhahood in Nirvana:

He (Buddha) reunited with the passionless sky, not again to
suffer
The shame of the low female gate, freed, never to be born
again

Buddha has virtuously escaped from existence by his own Eight-
fold Path.

After assiduously establishing his respect for the two
great religious leaders, Robinson Jeffers presents his funda-
mental objection to both religions: Jeffers singles out the
dichotomy of good and evil which the two religions insist upon
and says it is insignificant when compared to the actual beauties
and realities of the universe.

Robinson Jeffers' exhibited some monistic tendencies in
Californians. In Tamar monism emerges as Jeffers' primary reli-
gious concept. Repeatedly in "Point Pinos and Point Lobos"
Jeffers refers to "peace" by which he means a return to the one
creative source of the universe. In the midst of section one
of the poem, Jeffers records his adoration for this source or
fountain of the universe; the hymn is a precursor of Jeffers'
spectacular monistic poem "Night" which also made its first
appearance in Roan Stallion. In the following passage from
Point Pinos and Point Lobos" Jeffers attempts to define the
primal monistic source of the beauties of the universe:

... O shining of night, O eloquence of si-
lence, the mother of the stars, the beauty beyond beauty,
The sea that the stars and the sea and the mountain bones
of the earth and men's souls are the foam on, the opening
Of the womb of that ocean.

In Jeffers' estimation, Christ, who had known the harmonic splendors of the preexistent monistic state, forsook his abode of peace in order to have pity (like Buddha) on the human world. Pity, though, is part of dualism; its opposite is selfish cruelty. By focusing on pity and love in the world, the great mind of Christ concentrated on a dualistic side-issue and the magnificence of the primal origin of the universe was masked. Of Christ:

You have known this, you have known peace, and
forsaken
Peace for pity, you have known the beauty beyond beauty
And the other shore of God. You will never again know
them,
Except he slay you, the spirit at last, as more than once
The body, and root out love.

In a far future world culminating in human dominance over the solar system, Jeffers imagines the spirit of Christ (and the human race captivated by it) suddenly made aware--by God--of the more mature, original deity of the cosmos:

O a last time in the last wrench of man made godlike
Shall God not arise, bitterly, the power behind power, the last
star
That the stars hide, rise and reveal himself in anger--
Christ, in that moment when the hard loins of your ancient
Love and unconquerable will crack to lift up humanity
The last step heavenward--rise and slay, and you and our
children
Suddenly stumble on peace?

Jeffers believes that a dualistic religion of good and evil is a priori suspicious of matter. On the other hand, the monist sees matter as enduring and renewable. Jeffers questions

Christ's inability to have faith in a physical world which in its permanence, turns like a great wheel, recombining eternally to the extent that ultimately a recurrence of a world identical to ours is theoretically feasible:

Unhappy brother (Christ)
That high imagination mating mine
Has gazed deeper than graves: is it unendurable
To know that the huge season and wheel of things
Turns on itself forever, the new stars pass
And the old return and find out their places,
And these gray dead (the people buried in the Point Pinos
cemetery)
infallibly shall arise
In the very flesh

Jeffers' position then is that in the midst of seeming change, the universe is actually steady, constant and fixed on its course when viewed sub specie Jeffersiensis aeternitatis. Jeffers feels that the teachings of Christ are a step on the way of the development of the universe. As such, the teachings are valuable, but are not the ultimate source of truth.

The second section of "Point Pinos and Point Lobos" is devoted to Buddha. Of Point Lobos:

...there is no place
Taken like this out of deep Asia for a marriage-token, this
planted
Asiaward over the west water.

Point Lobos forms a physical link for Jeffers between east and west. The foreignness of Point Lobos prompts Robinson Jeffers to consider the religion Buddha founded, but here too Jeffers expresses his reservations concerning Buddha's dualistic assess-

ment of the human world. Buddha strove to rid himself and his followers of "the web of human passions / As a yellow lion the antelope-hunter's net" But Jeffers wonders in the poem whether Buddha's escape was actually final:

... is it freedom, smile of Buddha,
surely freedom? For someone
Whispered in my ear when I was very young, some serpent
whispered
That what has gone returns; what has been, is; what will
be, was; the future
Is a farther past; our times he said fractions of arcs of the
great circle;
And the wheel turns, nothing shall stop it or destroy it,
we are bound on the wheel,
We and the stars and seas, the mountains and the Buddha.
Weary tidings
To cross the weary, bitter to bitter men: life's conqueror
will not fear
Life; and to meditate again under the sacred tree, and again
Vanquish desire will be no evil.

To Robinson Jeffers, Fate (as in Californians) is a stronger and more enduring aspect of God than is a dualistic attempt to escape from desire and matter by dividing the world into the forces of good and evil. Buddha himself would not be harmed if he should return to his earthly state to meditate once again under the Boh tree.

The third division of "Point Pinos and Point Lobos" includes Jeffers' summarization of the weaknesses of Christianity and Buddhism. Jeffers views Christ and Buddha as rebellious against the instinctive monistic God of the universe:

O why were you rebellious, teachers
of men, against the instinctive God,
One (Christ) striving to overthrow his ordinances through
love and

the other(Buddha) crafty-eyed to escape them
Through patient wisdom: though you are wiser than all men
you are foolisher than the running grass,
That fades in season and springs up in season, praising
whom you blame.

Robinson Jeffers ends the poem (as he had concluded Californians)
by reiterating his conviction that the universe is underpinned
by one vital force and that beauty is "the essence and the end
of God":

For the essence and the end
Of his (God's) labor is beauty, for goodness and evil are
and still variant, but the quality of life as of death
of light
As of darkness is one, one beauty, the rhythm of that wheel,
and who can behold it is happy and will praise it to the
people.

Jeffers does not deny the existence of good and evil in the
world; he recognizes them as significant moral forces, but faults
Christianity and Buddhism for seizing on one aspect of the moral
and physical universe as the paramount theological issue.

"Point Pinos and Point Lobos" is Robinson Jeffers' most
important short poem on world religions; most important, that
is, until Jeffers published "Theory of Truth", the final poem
in his 1938 volume The Selected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers.
"Point Pinos and Point Lobos" presents the poet's thoughtful
rejection of Christianity and Buddhism, Jeffers preferring his
own monistic naturalism as a less distorted vision of the uni-
verse. Of the two religions considered in "Point Pinos and
Point Lobos", Jeffers seems to prefer Christianity while sin-

cerely indicating his respect for the persons and thoughts of Christ and Buddha. When, in future years, Robinson Jeffers will write of world religions, he will frequently refer to Christianity, scarcely mentioning the other five world religions.

The poem which follows "Point Pinos and Point Lobos" is "Not Our Good Luck". In it Jeffers states his conviction that God is eternally present in the world for all to see and observe. There is no excuse for following false religions--even if one should be unfortunate enough to live in an environment defiled by man such as

the mean mud tenements and huddle of the filth of
Babylon

The God of the universe does not hide himself from men:

God who walks lightning-naked on the Pacific has never
been hidden from any
Puddle or hillock of the earth behind us.

Jeffers is echoing St. Paul who wrote in Romans 1:20-21:

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God

For emphasis, Jeffers repeats his message toward the end of "Not Our Good Luck":

But here is the marvel, he (God) is nowhere not present,
his beauty,

it is burning in the midland villages
And tortures men's eyes in the alleys of cities.

Another poem of early composition Jeffers included in Tamar was "The Truce and the Peace (November, 1918)". In this eleven sonnet sequence Robinson Jeffers considers the shaky peace which concluded the First World War; the poet has his suspicions as to the permanence of the war's settlement, but offers his own deeper-reaching conception of peace to the world. Obsession with human problems cannot bring the individual true peace. The First World War never troubled God who did not even bother to waken to consider it. The same kind of untroubled peace is available to those who know such a God:

11

Peace to the world in time or in a year,
But always all our lives this peace was ours.
Peace is not hard to have, it lies more near
Than breathing to the breast. When brigand powers
Of anger or pain or the sick dream of sin
Break our soul's house outside the ruins we weep.
We look through the breached wall, why there within
All the red while our peace was lying asleep.
Smiling in dreams while the broad knives drank blood,
The robbers triumphed, the roof burned overhead,
The eternal living and untroubled God
Lying asleep upon a lily bed.
Men screamed, the bugles screamed, walls broke in the air,
We never knew till then that He was there.

Of the nineteen poems added to the contents of Tamar to create the Roan Stallion, Tamar volume, five short poems have theological significance: "Fog", "Phenomona", "Shine, Perishing

Republic", "The Treasure", and "The Torch-Bearers' Race". These five poems further elaborate the theological positions of Tamar.

"Fog" is a statement of Jeffers' monism. Jeffers credits the great religious and military leaders of western mankind with loving and serving ultimately the "one God". An innate passion for monism is also a quality of the creatures of nature, notably the gulls, crying out in the dense fog. Jeffers begins by addressing the gulls:

You dream
wild criers,
The peace that all life
Dreams gluttonously, the infinite self has eaten
Environment, and lives
Alone, unencroached on, perfectly gorged, one God.
Caesar and Napoleon
Visibly acting their dreams of that solitude, Christ and
Gautama,
Being God, devouring
The world with atonement for God's sake ... ah sacred
hunger,
The conqueror's, the prophet's,
The lover's, the hunger of the sea-beaks, slaves of the last
peace,
Worshippers of oneness.

The conqueror, the prophet, the lover, and the natural birds all end up glorifying the "one God".

"Phenomena" is a serene and unified statement of the inter-relation of all the phenomena of the world. Every thing and each being in the poem fit harmoniously into the Whole. From "the navy's new-bought Zeppelin" to the sea birds, all are included within "the great frame". Although the poem appears to

be merely a list of the ordinarily incongruous phenomena of the world now at peace, the poem is so cohesively constructed that it is difficult to dissect it at any of the thirteen semi-colon breaks. The unity of the poem is preserved only by quoting it in full.

Phenomena.

Great-enough both accepts and subdues; the great frame takes

all creatures;

From the greatness of their element they all take beauty.
Gulls; and the dingy freightship lurching south in the eye
of a rain-wind;

The air-plane dipping over the hill; hawks hovering
The white grass of the headland; cormorants roosting upon
the guano-

Whitened skerries; pelicans awind; sea-slime

Shining at night in the wave-stir like drowned men's
lanterns;

smugglers signaling

A cargo to land; or the old Point Pinos lighthouse.

Lawfully winking over dark water; the flight of the
twilight

herons.

Lonely wings and a cry; or with motor-vibrations
That hum in the rock like a new storm-tone of the ocean's
to turn eyes westward

The navy's new-bought Zeppelin going by in the twilight,
Far out seaward; relative only to the evening star and the
ocean

It slides into a cloud over Point Lobos.

The final two lines of "Shine, Perishing Republic" underscore Robinson Jeffers' opinion that Christ, by not being "moderate as in love of man", fell into the fatal trap of adhering to a dualism of good and evil:

There is the trap that catches noblest spirits, that
they say--God, when he walked on earth. caught--

Robinson Jeffers advises his sons to be more discreetly intelligent in their sympathies for humanity. Untoward love of man entraps one into the unhappy dualistic position of either loving or hating mankind.

In "The Treasure" Robinson Jeffers places existence in perspective. Given the monistic view that the universe is eternally an outflowing of the process of God, the brief existence of the earth, a star, or a human being is important only as brief definition to "the ages of the / gulf before birth, and the gulf / After death". The purpose of being is to define not-being; however, "nothing / lives long". The peace of re-entering the non-existent state is the solace for the exigencies and vagaries of being. Jeffers concludes "The Treasure":

I fancy
That silence is the thing, this noise (existence) a found
word for it;
interjection, a jump of the breath at the silence;
Stars burn, grass grows, men breathe: as a man finding
treasure says "Ah!" but the treasure's the essence;
Before the man spoke it was there, and after he has spoken
he gathers it, inexhaustible treasure.

In "The Torch-Bearers' Race" (as in "Roan Stallion") Robinson Jeffers indicates that the God of the universe is not anthropomorphic:

... O flame, O beauty and shower
of beauty,
There is yet one ocean and then no more, God whom you
(humanity)
shine to walks there naked, on the final Pacific,
Not in a man's form.

The westward migrations of man (the torch-bearers' race, to use Jeffers' terminology) and all of man's existence on the planet "shine to" the glory of God.

In Roan Stallion, Tamar and Other Poems of 1925 Robinson Jeffers reveals for the first time the active splendor and power of his deity. Nearly all the poems of the volume have Jeffers' firm theological beliefs as their touchstone. Jeffers' religious convictions are basic to understanding his poetry and ideology. Roan Stallion is the first of many volumes which provide a better glimpse of Jeffers' mature conception of God.

Robinson Jeffers' next volume of poetry, The Women at Point Sur, was published in 1927. It is Jeffers' third major work, but this time there was not the charm, for, although the book was twice reprinted, few readers indeed understood Jeffers' intentions. Jeffers' disappointment was deep and lasting; never again did he attempt so ambitious a lengthy narrative poem with no short lyrics trailing the work. Still, "The Women at Point Sur" remains Jeffers' finest long narrative on a theological theme--if not his finest poem outright. The work deserves a full theological study of its own.

On August 18th, 1927, a month and a half after the appearance of his The Women at Point Sur, Robinson Jeffers' shorter

poems written after Roan Stallion appeared in what proved to be a unique format in Jeffers' career. Harcourt, Brace and Company issued that August an auto-anthology assembled by Louis Untermeyer entitled American Poetry 1927 A Miscellany in which the various contributors selected their own previously unpublished verse. One of the few limitations was that "Each contributor is to have twenty pages completely at his disposal." Robinson Jeffers submitted fifteen short poems which took up twenty-four pages. Never again would Jeffers' short poems appear in any such quantity under another publisher's imprint than his own. Perhaps his bitter experience with the reception of the single long narrative "The Women at Point Sur" in one volume convinced the poet always to include some of his brief works with the longer poetic narratives.

The poems presented for the first time in American Poetry 1927 A Miscellany were reprinted in 1935 when Random House devoted a volume of its new Modern Library editions to the works of Robinson Jeffers, the first modern poet to be included in the series. All fifteen of the Miscellany poems were reprinted in the 1935 Modern Library edition of Roan Stallion, Tamar and Other Poems which remained in print until a few years after 1953 when its publishers foolishly let the helpful little volume drop out of print.

The Miscellany poems, as one might expect, are closest in tone and topic to those short poems which helped fill Roan Stall-

lion, Tamar of 1925, a book published only twenty-one months before. The one difference between the poems of the 1925 volume and those included in the Miscellany is that the later verses tend to be more topical in nature, the "Noon" poem already cited a ready example of this specificity of reference. Some of Jeffers' early sonnets are gathered from their original appearances in Monterey Peninsula newspapers--the sonnet "Compensation", for example. Later sonnets are also featured, but the outstanding poem in the Miscellany is Jeffers' ars poetica, "Apology for Bad Dreams". It is the longest and most intricate of the Miscellany poems, divided into four sections.

In section two of "Apology for Bad Dreams" Robinson Jeffers introduces a new theological concept which is fundamental to his reason for creating the long tragic verse narratives for which he had become reknowned. Jeffers' conviction is that beautiful natural places evoke from men the only human response--profound personal tragedy--which could begin to equal the natural grandeur. If God presents magnificence, then he requires the best "shining" man can muster, tragedy.

This coast crying out for tragedy like all beautiful places:
and like the passionate spirit of humanity
Pain for its bread: God's, many victims, the painful deaths,
the horrible transfigurements: I said in my heart,
"Better invent than suffer: imagine victims
Lest your own flesh be chosen the agonist, or you
Martyr some creature to the beauty of the place."

Why does Jeffers write such tragic verse? Out of necessity:

And I said,
 "Burn sacrifices once a year to magic
 Horror away from the house, this little house here
 You have built over the ocean with your own hands
 Beside the standing boulders: for what are we,
 The beast that walks upright, with speaking lips
 And little hair, to think we should always be fed,
 Sheltered, intact, and self-controlled? We sooner more
liable
 Than the other animals. Pain and terror, the insanitites of
 desire; not accidents but essential,
 And crowd up from the core:" I imagined victims for those
 wolves, I made them phantoms to follow,
 They have hunted the phantoms
and missed the house. It
 is not good to forget over what gulfs the spirit
 Of the beauty of humanity, the petal of a lost flower blown
 seaward by the night-wind, floats to its quietness.

Jeffers assumed the responsibilities of a poet in a solemn serious manner: "I can tell lies in prose." Time and again, Jeffers even in his verse, will comment on his tragic characters (chiefly Tamar Cauldwell, but others too) in a fashion which leaves no doubt as to Jeffers' thoughts and feelings for them: the creatures are well-nigh real to Jeffers; he pities their suffering; he recalls their agonies, all in an effort to trick the "wolves" of calamity and misfortune from assaulting "this little house here". The motives are perhaps more profound than the characters; certainly they are pre-Christian in their practice. Quite possibly, Jeffers writes his tragic verse narratives out of a compulsion to fend off the evil which began in his mind as a result of his premarital relationship with Una. Strangely haunted by such an apprehension, the poet writes his "stories" in an effort--successful until 1950 when Una died--to divert the tragedy "all beautiful places" require.

Is Jeffers doing here what he--as a monist--promised not

to do--that is, become intoxicated with a dualistic world of good and evil? Undoubtedly the poet would explain his position thus: although Jeffers was trained as a Christian to perceive good and evil in things, and, although he experienced feelings of guilt (evil) over his early relationship with the already married Una, Jeffers' subsequent compulsion to write "stories" featuring tragic victims is an attempt to avert the coming of the opposite of his happy life. As the old German proverb has it, Nach viele Lachenden kommt viele Sorgenden, 'After much laughing comes much sorrowing.' The balanced monistic God of the universe would sometime seek to counterpoise the immoderate personal happiness which Jeffers enjoyed. To forestall such an eventuality, Jeffers writes his stories of "imagined victims".

For Jeffers, writing the tragic narratives was more than a casual occupation; it was essential to his own personal well-being. The poet painfully recognized the transience of human life and human happiness. In an effort to counter the balancing forces of God, Jeffers wrote--and built--to last. The four-foot thick walls of his Hawk Tower, built solely by the poet, stand today as mute testimony to Jeffers' temperamental necessity to meet time and transience with implacable will. Such a display of human determination Jeffers sought but did not find in his contemporary world. Later in his travels to Ireland he find and deeply admire it in the form of the ancient stone monuments of that isle.

Yet Robinson Jeffers claims in the final lines of "Apology

for Bad Dreams" not to know why God loves the ebb and flow, the creation and destruction of the worlds he builds. This is the way the world is. It requires more love than explanation.

Who, argues Jeffers, can know the mind of God himself?

I have seen these ways of God: I know of no reason
For fire and change and torture and the old returnings.
He being sufficient might be still. I think they admit no
reason; they are the ways of my love.
Unmeasured power, incredible passion, enormous craft: no
thought apparent but burns darkly
Smothered with its own smoke in the human brain-vault:
no thought outside: a certain measure in phenomena:
The fountains of the boiling stars, the flowers on the fore-
land, the ever-returning roses of dawn.

God, who could be quiescent, chooses restlessness for himself in his creation. His reasons are his own. It is matter, not motives, which carry God's imprint for the human mind.

Already in the poems of the Miscellany Robinson Jeffers feels that love of God is more important to humanity than self-love. People should mature enough to realize that love for man at the expense of the adoration of God is babyish as Jeffers declares in his poem on thoughts of growing old, "Age in Prospect":

To look around and to love in his appearances,
Though a little calmly, the universal God's
Beauty is better I think than to lip eagerly
The mother's breast or another woman's.

Jeffers might have written "To look outward", out of human self-centeredness to see God in what he had made, "his appearances".

In "Pelicans" Robinson Jeffers notes another aspect of his God as observed in the birds of his region. Four pelicans, ungainly anachronisms of the air and clumsy, have flown over Tor House followed by "A lifting gale of sea-gulls," graceful as the pelicans are ungainly. The contrast stuck in Jeffers' mind and the poet concludes that God

The omniseccular spirit keeps the old with the new also.
Nothing at all has suffered erasure.

There is life not of our time. (The pelicans) He calls
ungainly bodies

As beautiful as the grace of horses.

He is weary of nothing; he watches air-planes; he watches pelicans.

God does not reject or phase out his creations. The ancient wings which "remember ... The dinosaur's day" are as welcome and proper in the air as the most recent flying contraption, a man-built air-plane. Everything proceeds from and returns to the one source.

"Credo", the fifteenth of Jeffers' short poems in the Miscellany, considers Oriental pantheism and records Jeffers' own certitude of the reality of natural phenomena. Jeffers' Asiatic friend believes that the external world exists only because his mind makes it exist. Jeffers, an Occidental, believes precisely the opposite. Reality comes not from the human mind which observes the world, but from the essence of matter itself. This frame of mind is a "harder mysticism", but one which Robinson Jeffers feels to be closer to God. The beauties of the world were present before the human mind could

perceive them and will remain long after humans have vanished; a harder doctrine, but also more factual. Here is Robinson Jeffers' belief in his

Credo

My friend from Asia has powers and magic, he plucks a
blue leaf from the young blue-gum
And gazing upon it, creates an ocean more real than the
ocean, the salt, the actual
Appalling presence, the power of the waters.
He believes that nothing is real except as we make it. I
humbler have found in my blood
Bred west of Caucasus a harder mysticism.
Multitude stands in my mind but I think that the ocean in
the bone vault is only
The bone vault's ocean: Out there is the ocean's;
The water is the water, the cliff is the rock, come shocks
and
flashes of reality. The mind
Passes, the eye closes, the spirit is a passage;
The beauty of things was born before eyes and sufficient to
itself; the heart-breaking beauty
Will remain when there is no heart to break for it.

Jeffers' firm belief, his credo, is that reality is quite independent of man's ability to grasp it. The magnificence of "the beauty of things" goes well beyond man's meager and humble capability to appreciate what God has placed of himself in matter. Such beauty, which will survive us, is also an attribute of God.

The year after The Women at Point Sur, Horace Liveright released another volume of Jeffers' verse entitled Cawdor and Other Poems, 1928. This time the full-length narrative, "Cawdor", was followed by sixteen shorter poems. These lyrics reflect Jeffers' deepening pessimism on a variety of fronts.

The joyous sense of proclaiming and praising God "to the people" so present in Roan Stallion, Tamar is entirely absent in the short poems of Cawdor. No doubt Jeffers remembered the misunderstanding of The Women at Point Sur. The optimistic excesses of everyday life in the Twenties prompted an equal and opposite reaction from the poet of the Hawk Tower.

The most grim of the short poems of the Cawdor volume is "A Redeemer". On a hiking trip in the coast range hills Jeffers and his wife encounter "a redeemer" who had inflicted on his hands the signs of the "stigmata of crucifixion." The man explains:

"I pick them (the wounds) open. I made them long ago with
a clean
steel. It is only a little to pay--"

The purpose of his wounds is to build up in the mind of God an antitoxin to counteract the frail happinesses of the human world which have multiplied into imbalance:

I am here on the mountain making
Antitoxin for all the happy towns and farms, the lovely
Blameless children, the terrible
Arrogant cities.

When Jeffers attempts to compare the man's wounds to those of Christ, the redeemer's reply is scathing:

He laughed angrily and frowned, stroking
The fingers of one hand with the other. "Religion is the
people's opium. Your little Jew-God?
My pain," he said with pride, "is voluntary.
They (the people) have done what never was done before. Not
as a
people takes a land to love it and be fed

.
Oh, as a rich man eats a forest for profit and a field for
vanity, so you came west and raped
The continent and brushed its people to death. Without
need

The redeemer continues on in a haunting jeremiad against the excessess of human life in his time. "A Redeemer" reflects Jeffers' growing aversion for human disregard for what Jeffers feels to be divine. As well, "A Redeemer" castigates Christianity for its inability to redeem a society which "thinks(s) of nothing but happiness".

The site of the poem "Bixby's Landing" later became the locus of Jeffers' 1932 narrative "Thurso's Landing". Jeffers describes the beauties of the deserted limeworks at Bixby Creek and concludes by observing that "mother the wilderness" can return to repair the transient human despoilment of the earth with even greater beauty than before.

Men's failures are often as beautiful as men's triumphs,
but your (nature's) returnings
Are even more precious than your first presence.

"Hurt Hawks" is perhaps Robinson Jeffers' most anthologized poem. Wildness is one of the theological and naturalistic qualities Jeffers accentuates in Cawdor, and in section one of "Hurt Hawks" Jeffers notes that his God is ultimately friend neither to the arrogant nor to the docile of the world:

The wild God of the world is sometimes merciful to those
That ask mercy, not often to the arrogant.

You do not know him, you communal people, or you have
forgotten him;
Intemperate and savage, the hawk remembers him;
Beautiful and wild, the hawks, and men that are dying
remember him.

The final poem of Cawdor, "Meditation on Saviors", is also the most theological of the short poems of the volume. Jeffers' subject matter is the archetypal human need for a savior. A savior, Jeffers opines, is easier to lean upon than truth or self-reliance. A caustic reference to institutionalized Christianity is combined with Jeffers' own suggestion for an efficacious savior:

The apes of Christ lift up their hands to praise love: but
wisdom without love is the present savior
Power without hatred, mind like a many-bladed machine
subduing the world with deep indifference.

The apes of Christ itch for a sickness they have never
known; words and the little envies will hardly
Measure against that blinding fire behind the tragic eyes
they have never dared to confront.

"Deep indifference," the indifference of a monist who knows the world is on its foreordained, unalterable course. Praising love, one pole of a dualistic vision of the world, is inappropriate with the "rottenness I smelt; / from the world...."

Jeffers, however, realizes that even humanity is needed to complete the cycle of the universe to be played out here on earth, and he does not want arbitrarily to be separated from such a drama:

Yet I am the one made pledges against the refuge contempt, that easily locks the world out of doors.
This people as much as the sea-granite is part of the God from whom I desire not to be fugitive.

Jeffers does not pity mankind; instead he realizes humanity's appropriate niche in the annals of the earth.

Fatalism re-emerges in the middle of "Meditation on Saviors". Wondering whether he could warn against the results of human folly, Jeffers realizes that anything he could say or write would already be part of the great plan:

The mountain ahead of the world is not forming but fixed.
But the man's (a prophet's) words would be fixed also,
Part of that mountain, under equal compulsion; under the same present compulsion in the iron consistency.

Jeffers writes then, not out of an intent to save the people, but because his writing, too, is "part of that mountain". This understood, good and evil are truly perceivable only years later:

And nobody sees good or evil but out of a brain a hundred centuries quieted

In other words, by then, good and evil will be non-essential.

Do the people, in Jeffers' estimation, really need a redeemer, a savior then? Of course not, replies Jeffers, for they already have the most efficacious savior who ministers indifferently to all; they become part of God himself when their consciousness is dissolved in death:

And having touched a little of the beauty and seen a little
of the beauty of things, (people) magically grow
Across the funeral fire or hidden stench of burial
themselves into the beauty they admired,

Themselves into the God, themselves into the sacred
steep unconsciousness they used to mimic
Asleep between lamp's death and dawn, while the last
drunkard stumbled homeward down the dark street.

They are not to be pitied but very fortunate: they need no
savior, salvation comes and takes them by force,
It gathers them into the great kingdoms of dust and
stone, the blown storms, the stream's-end ocean.

Jeffers concludes Cawdor by touching on one of his major
theological conceptions of future poems: love, when it is
directed into a faith which is dualistic, is ultimately a self-
seeking and self-adorative activity. The adoration of a Christ
or a Buddha (both of whom accentuated good and evil in the hu-
man world) is narcissistic:

Love, the mad wine of good and evil, the saints and
murderer's, the mote in the eye that makes its object
Shine the sun black; the trap in which it is better to catch
the inhuman God than the hunter's own image.

When you love, Jeffers advises, turn your love outward away from
humanity to the real "inhuman God". Wishing for himself to avoid
wasting emotions on humanity, Robinson Jeffers writes in "The
Bird with the Dark Plumes"

It is almost as foolish my poor falcon
To want hatred as to want love; and harder to win.

Jeffers proved to be his own best prophet. In future years he
would win the hatred of those who disliked or misunderstood
what Jeffers called his "truths".

As with "The Women at Point Sur", the two major narratives of Jeffers' 1929 volume, Dear Judas and Other Poems,--"Dear Judas" and "The Loving Shepherdess"--are of supreme importance for a complete understanding of Robinson Jeffers' theological Weltanschauung. These two poems also deserve a separate consideration as milestones of Jeffers' developing religious ideology. Both the poems develop the theme that excesses in love or compassion bring ruin to those who are imprudently enmeshed with humanity as is the case with both Judas and Clare Walker, the respective protagonists of the two poems.

The Dear Judas volume, with its two narrative poems of religious import, has but six short poems to end the work. Two of these shorter poems, "Birth-Dues" and "Hooded Night", are of theological interest. "Birth-Dues" echos the thought of "Hurt Hawks" that the world's God is unreliable by human standards and inescapable:

The world's God is treacherous and full of unreason; a
torturer, but also
The only foundation and the only fountain.
Who fights him eats his own flesh and perishes of hunger;
who hides in the grave
To escape him is dead; who enters the Indian
Recession to escape him is dead; who falls in love with the
God is washed clean
Of death desired and of death dreaded.

Robinson Jeffers suggests that atheism, meditation techniques, and hopes of a final death and dissolution are all futile attempts to evade the God of the world. One must turn to and love the process that God has set in order, harmonize one's

self to whatever intentions the God may exhibit. This done, one need neither fear nor long for death. Death, the end of life, will come when it is ready and will be received in a neutral manner by he "who falls in love with the / God"

Such a person will view the universe and the human emotions from a neutral stance. Jeffers concludes "Birth-Dues" by supposing that even though he had clearly presented such a course of thought, scarcely anyone will have the "energy to hear effectively".

He has joy, but joy is a trick in the air; and pleasure, but
pleasure is contemptible;
And peace; and is based on solidier than pain.
He has broken boundaries a little and that will estrange
him; he is monstrous, (to other people) but not
To the measure of the God.... But I having told you--
However I suppose that few in the world have energy to
hear effectively--
Have paid my birth-dues; am quits with the people.

"Hooded Night", the final poem of Dear Judas, is a reaffirmation of Jeffers' pantheistic faith in the forms of nature. Moved by the pre-dawn still darkness, the poet restates his faith in the "final unridiculous peace" which abides in the superb natural features of his land; the ancient granite rock, the permanent ocean, and the venerable cypresses of the Monterey peninsula. By comparison, the human world and its obsessions is "a spectral episode".

But here is the final unridiculous peace, Before the first
man
Here were the stones, the ocean, the cypresses,

And the pallid region in the stone-rough dome of fog where
the moon
Falls on the west. Here is reality.
The other is a spectral episode: after the inquisitive
animal's (man's)
Amusements are quiet: the dark glory.

In 1932, in the throes of the Great Depression, Liveright issued its final book of Robinson Jeffers' verse, Thurso's Landing and Other Poems; shortly thereafter Jeffers' first major publisher became a casualty of the hard times. The main narrative of the volume, "Thurso's Landing", is followed by ten shorter poems. Jeffers' shorter narrative "Margrave" appears as the final poem of the book, an outstanding example of what the poet was able to do with a different class of poems, the poetic narrative of medium length.

The shorter poems of Thurso's Landing have little to do with Jeffers' ideas on God. Only "The Bed by the Window", a powerful ten-line poem which deals with the poet's preferred place of death, contains a God-related topic. In the poem Jeffers expresses his belief that God provides each life on the earth with sufficient time and opportunity to complete its predestined course:

We are safe to finish what we have to finish;
And then it will sound rather like music
When the patient daemon behind the screen of sea-rock
and sky
Thumps with his staff, and calls thrice: "Come, Jeffers."

Robinson Jeffers has previously recorded his belief in pre-destination, but what is new here is the poet's specific refer-

ence to himself. In later years (particularly in his last three volumes of poetic narratives) Jeffers' subject matter will become increasingly personal in reference.

Why is the theological content of Thurso's Landing so meager? Guesses: perhaps the poet had written all he wished to write at the time on the topic of God; perhaps the troubles of the Depression diverted his attention to the contemporary human plight; perhaps Jeffers was more interested at the time in the many places which feature strongly in the poems of Thurso's Landing; perhaps Jeffers felt that he was indeed "quits with the people" at long last and had no desire to praise a God to them which they had not previously comprehended; perhaps Jeffers' experiences in travel to Ireland momentarily diverted his attention from his own coast and his pantheistic devotion to it. In any event, the theological content of Robinson Jeffers' poetry reaches its lowest quantitative ebb in 1932.

In 1933 Random House issued its first major volume by the Carmel poet, Give Your Heart to the Hawks and Other Poems. The book is one of Jeffers' richest, for beside the lead narrative poem and the standard shorter poems following it, the book contains Jeffers' magnificent English and Irish verses (already published separately by Random House in 1931 as Descent to the Dead in a limited edition of 500 copies) as well as two medium length narratives: "Resurrection" and "At the Fall of an Age". Give Your Heart to the Hawks is perhaps

Jeffers' most balanced single volume of verse for it contains both short and long poems of variety and intensity.

In Give Your Heart to the Hawks Robinson Jeffers introduces a new theological emphasis. God, as Jeffers notes in "A Little Scraping", will allow humanity to multiply to excess before dispassionately gathering it in:

God is here, too, secretly smiling, the beautiful power
That piles up cities for the poem of their fall
And gathers multitude like game to be hunted when the
season comes.

The new emphasis is based on Jeffers' dislike for the burgeoning masses of humanity set up in their millions like so many dominoes ripe for mass death. Jeffers' monism tells him that equilibrium in populations will eventually be orchestrated by God; in this neutral view, man is no different from deer or rabbits or pheasants.

A sense of population balance is what the poet strives for in "Still the Mind Smiles". The tone of the poem is similar to that of the Preacher in Ecclesiastes; everything has its opposite, and God, the exact poet, will return his creation to normal in a world where--once again--humans "are few":

It is necessary to remember our norm, the unaltered passions,
The same-colored wings of imagination,
That the crowd clips, in lonely places new-grown; the un-
changed
Lives of herdsmen and mountain farms,
Where are few, and few tools, a few weapons, and their
dawns are beautiful.
From here for normal one sees both ways,
And listens to the splendor of God, the exact poet, the
sonorous
Antistrophe of desolation to the strophe multitude.

Scarcity makes value, and Jeffers who looks down both sides of the mountain of human existence can see scarcity down the slope of the past and multitude down the grade of the future. It is "the splendor of God" which will return to "our norm", man's momentarily excessive numbers.

In "Triad" Jeffers associates three seemingly unrelated topics: the confusion of modern science and its inability to "understand...the nature of things", the "trap" of the Russian Revolution of 1917, and the poet's sober task to deal in truths. All three components of this triad

... feed the future, they serve God,
Who is very beautiful, but hardly a friend of humanity.

A neutral God can scarcely be expected to be partial to the human presence in his vast universe. In Jeffers' view, God cannot be relied upon to save man from future mass tragedy.

"Intellectuals" is Jeffers' declaration of independence from humanity as organized in the mass around a great leader. Marx, Christ and Progress must be rejected by anyone who wishes not to "flock into fold" with the rest of the human herd. Jeffers has his own view of salvation as the middle verse of the poem points out. His adoration of the God is always one-sided, Jeffers to God. Reverence for outstanding humans or human ideals, Jeffers proclaims, is on the blind and circuituous path of human self-gratification and self-deification. The only solution to the human dilemma is to break out of our-

selves and encounter and love "Our unkindly all but inhuman God". Jeffers implies that the human mind, the idol of intellectuals, does not contain the correct answer to the Gordian knot of human narcissism. But outgoing love of the "all but inhuman" God of the world is one activity not stained by the heady human fixation with itself. Jeffers' is the one God who cannot be contaminated by human introversion.

INTELLECTUALS

Is it so hard for men to stand by themselves,
They must hang on Marx or Christ, or mere Progress?
Clearly it is hard. But these ought to be leaders ...
Sheep leading sheep, "The fold, the fold,
Night comes, and the wolves of doubt." Clearly it is hard.

Yourself, if you had not encountered and loved
Our unkindly all but inhuman God,
Who is very beautiful and too secure to want worshippers,
And includes indeed the sheep with the wolves,
You too might have been looking about for a church.

He includes the flaming stars and pitiable flesh,
And what we call things and what we call nothing.
He is very beautiful. But when these lonely have travelled
Through long thoughts to redeeming despair,
They are tired and cover their eyes; they flock into fold.

"Intellectuals" is the outstanding short poem of a theological nature in Give Your Heart to the Hawks. Its brief fifteen lines contain one of Jeffers' major definitions of his conception of God. The poem also reflects Jeffers' growing desire to be separate from the masses to whom he reluctantly (now) serves as solitary herald of the "all but inhuman God".

Written in Great Britain and Ireland, the elegiac poems of Descent to the Dead were actually first printed in 1931. They

were appended to the contents of Give Your Heart to the Hawks and are the only major body of Jeffers' work not affected or directly influenced by Jeffers' pantheistic devotion to the inland region and coast south of Carmel. The effect of the English and Irish countryside on Jeffers was extraordinary and uniquely stimulating. The poems of Descent to the Dead rank among the best Jeffers ever was to compose, solemnly distinct in tone from most of the poems in the Jeffers canon. The poems are not particularly theocentric since Jeffers was concerned more with the mood of the places of his ancestors where

... I a foreigner, one who has come to the country of the
dead

Before I was called, (came)
To eat the bitter dust of my ancestors;

Jeffers is more concerned with the climate, human pre-history and background of the British Isles than with the special nature of the God of a land where by Jeffers' admission in "In the Hill at New Grange" "A foreigner I am."

Confronted in Ireland (as he was not in his own coast) with millenia of human pre-history, Jeffers concludes "The Giant's Ring, Ballylessen, near Belfast" with the charge that Christianity's hereafter is a "cheap" immortality compared to that enjoyed by the builders of the Giant's Ring,

.....Piled up of ponderous basalt that sheds the centuries like
rain-drops (,)

which

...has ear-marked already some four millenniums.

The "very presence" of the original builder of the Giant's Ring,
"thick-bodied and brutish, a brutal and senseless will-power"
would

--Conclude that secular like Christian immortality's
Too cheap a bargain: the name, the work or the soul: glass
beads are the trade for savages.

Religious burial in Ireland is the topic of "Delusions of
Saints". Jeffers repeats his contentions that Christian be-
lievers (saints)

...sleep now as easily as any dead murderer
Or worn-out lecher.

From the perspective of the grave, the saints possess forever
the sealed message that their faith was in vain:

To have found your faith a liar is no thorn
In the narrow beds,
Nor laughter of unfriends no rumor of the ruinous
Churches will reach you.

When the grave inscriptions are washed from the rock by the
centuries, Jeffers writes that the Christian beliefs will

Have shed the feeble delusions that built them,

and

...stand inhumanly
Clean and massive

as their pagan predecessors do now.

The tone of Jeffers' writing on religion in Descent to the Dead is not so much anti-Christian as pre-Christian. In a land where many forms and types of religion were practiced over the centuries and where the coming of Christianity with St. Patrick is still a relatively new event, Jeffers strikes contrasts among the religions, and in passing, finds Christianity, the latest of the many faiths, wanting.

"Inscription for a Gravestone" is a personalized view of life after death. From the grave, the speaker tells of his new-found union with the natural elements and God. An attitude of final peace and lasting contentment with the prospect of death conditions the work.

INSCRIPTION FOR A GRAVESTONE

I am not dead, I have only become inhuman:
That is to say,
Undressed myself of laughable prides and infirmities
But not as a man
Undresses to creep into bed, but like an athlete
Stripping for the race.
The delicate ravel of nerves that made me a measurer
Of certain fictions
Called good and evil; that made me contract with pain
And expand with pleasure;
Fussily adjusted like a little electroscope:
That's gone, it is true;
(I never miss it; if the universe does,
How easily replaced!)

But all the rest is heightened, widened, set free.
I admired the beauty
While I was human, now I am part of the beauty.
I wander in the air,
Being mostly gas and water, and flow in the ocean;
Touch you and Asia
At the same moment; have a hand in the sunrises
And the glow of this grass.
I left the light precipitate of ashes to earth
for a love-token.

A more characteristic and appropriate statement of Jeffers' thoughts on death does not exist.

Two years after Give Your Heart to the Hawks and Other Poems Robinson Jeffers had his eighth major volume of poetry published under the title of Solstice and Other Poems, 1935. It was his first book not to feature the title narrative first. In Solstice Jeffers' reawakens his interest in writing poems about God. Six of the eighteen shorter poems are centrally concerned with theological topics. Once again Jeffers' immediate vision of God is at the epicenter of his work. Solstice (with the exception of Roan Stallion, Tamar) is Jeffers' most theocentric volume of verse to date.

Jeffers seems to have abnegated his wish to become separate from the people who are also a part of God, for in Solstice the poet regains something of his attitude of praising God to the world. The theologically important short poems of Solstice, as those of Roan Stallion, Tamar had done before them, radiate Jeffers' pantheism so firmly identified with the Sur Coast. It is as if Jeffers, "now returned home" sees with new eyes the magnificence of the region he first saw as a young man in love. This rising theological exuberance will grow to find its apogee in the incomparable naturalistic beauty of the short poems of Such Counsels You Gave to Me and Other Poems of 1937.

Two of Jeffers' major doctrines about God reach their culmination in Solstice: the view that the natural world is

neutral toward man and not accessory to the humanized dualism of good or evil; and the view that the real world is revealed to us by the senses and is material in nature, not idealistic or spiritualistic. This latter view Jeffers had already expressed in Dear Judas: "Here is reality".

"Rock and Hawk" straight-forwardly presents Jeffers' neutral view of nature in the words, "final disinterestedness". Christianity and its Mormon offshoot (the hive) are not based on the observable disinterestedness of the universe. They impose a dualistic vision of good and evil on a monistic "mysticism of stone" and clearly are not the emblems "to hang in the future sky." Look at the world for what it really is, challenges Jeffers in the poem, and you will see that truth is inherent in the gray rocks and the falcons, not in a fictitious spiritualization of the world.

ROCK AND HAWK

Here is a symbol in which
Many high tragic thoughts
Watch their own eyes.

This gray rock, standing tall
On the headland, where the seawind
Lets no tree grow.

Earthquake-proved, and signatored
By ages of storms: on its peak
A falcon has perched.

I think, here is your emblem
To hang in the future sky;
Not the cross, not the hive,

But this; bright power, dark peace;
Fierce consciousness joined with final
Disinterestedness;

Life with calm death; the falcon's
Realist eyes and act
Married to the massive

Mysticism of stone,
Which failure cannot cast down
Nor success make proud.

Over a dozen nouns in this brief poem underscore Jeffers' concern in presenting the real and non-human tangible world of naturally occurring phenomena.

The neutral view of nature is prominent in another of the poems of Solstice, "Gray Weather". The poem praises the serene balance of nature; "no kind of excess" is evident in the Pacific Coast winter scene here presented:

GRAY WEATHER

It is true that, older than man
 and ages to outlast him, the Pacific surf
Still cheerfully pounds the worn granite drum;
But there's no storm; and the birds are still,
 no song; no kind of excess;
Nothing that shines, nothing is dark;
There is neither joy nor grief nor a person,
 the sun's tooth sheathed in cloud,
And life has no more desires than a stone.
The stormy conditions of time and change
 are all abrogated, the essential
Violences of survival, pleasure,
Love, wrath and pain, and the curious desire
 of knowing, all perfectly suspended.
In the cloudy light, in the timeless quietness,
One explores deeper than the nerves
 or heart of nature, the womb or soul,
To the bone, the careless white bone, the excellence.

Beyond the froth of circumstance lies the quiet truth of the immanent God, "the careless white bone, the excellence."

Robinson Jeffers celebrates the actual, observable world in "Flight of Swans", the final poem of Solstice. As in "Rock and Hawk", the poet emphasizes real things (the constellation Orion, winter midnight, mountains, floods and seasons) and denigrates the illusory human invention of idealism:

And knows that exactly this and not another
 is the world,
The ideal is phantoms for bait,
 the spirit is a flicker on a grave;--
May serve, with a certain detachment,
 the fugitive human race,
Or his own people, his own household;
 but hardly himself;
And will not wind himself into hopes
 nor sicken with despairs.
He has found the peace and adored the God;
 he handles in autumn
The germs of far-future spring.

Jeffers likens his own relationship with God to a "diamond within" which he touches to the "diamond outside"--the real God-infused world.

"Sign-Post" of the Solstice volume and "The Answer" of Such Counsels You Gave to Me are Jeffers' most direct poems which answer the charges that Jeffers' religious philosophy is cold and unliveable. Civilization, which Jeffers elsewhere had called a "transient sickness", corrupts man into falsely believing in mass produced security; the lethargy which accompanies it isolates man from the realities of the existence of God. "Sign-Post" is a theological directive for man, written out of compassionate concern for man's present plight as Jeffers sees it. The sonnet provides modern man with the spool of

thread to escape the maze he has created for himself. A variety of methods (including aspects of Christianity) are recommended by the poet who has no dogma to dispense except the fundamental realization that man (who is not central to God or the universe) can perceive the real world in true perspective and "love God" in the bargain.

SIGN-POST

Civilized, crying how to be human again:
 this will tell you how.
Turn outward, love things, not men,
 turn right away from humanity,
Let that doll lie. Consider if you like how
 the lilies grow,
Lean on the silent rock until you feel its divinity
Make your veins cold, look at the silent stars,
 let your eyes
Climb the great ladder out of the pit of yourself
 and man.
Things are so beautiful, your love
 will follow your eyes;
Things are the God, you will love God, and not in vain,
For what we love, we grow to it, we share
 its nature. At length
You will look back along the stars' rays
 and see that even
The poor doll humanity has a place under heaven.
Its qualities repair their mosaic around you,
 the chips of strength
And sickness; but now you are free, even
 to become human,
But born of the rock and the air, not of a woman.

Remarkable for its adroit end rhymes, the poem alludes to Christ's Sermon on the Mount and to the words of Stephen Brown in the first narrative in Californians: "We grow to be what we have loved." Jeffers shows that his religious beliefs are not necessarily anti-human but inhuman, in the sense that man (in Jeffers' eyes) is not what man presumes himself to be: the lord of an anthropocentric universe. Once man learns of

his true stature "under heaven", he is "free, even / to become human".

Even death in this attitude comes into perspective for in "Where I?" Jeffers considers the case of a woman who has terminal cancer. Her imminent death

...gives to her face a kind of glory.
Her mind used to be lazy and heavy her face,
Now she talks all in haste, looks young and lean
And eager, her eyes glitter with eagerness,
As if she were newly born and had never seen
The beauty of things, the terror, pain, joy, the song.
--Or is it better to live at ease, dully and long?

The sonnet shows that even a sluggish human life can be revitalized by contact with one of the basic realities of nature, death.

One of Robinson Jeffers' own favorite short poems, and one of his best, the most characteristic and dexterous of his sonnets, "Return", recalls the poet to the features of the earth for his pantheistic renewal.

RETURN

A little too abstract, a little too wise,
It is time for us to kiss the earth again,
It is time to let the leaves rain
 from the skies,
Let the rich life run to the roots again.
I will go down to the lovely Sur Rivers
And dip my arms in them up to the shoulders.
I will find my accounting where the alder leaf quivers
In the ocean wind over the river boulders.
I will touch things and things and no more thoughts,
That breed like mouthless May-flies
 darkening the sky
The insect clouds that blind our passionate hawks
So that they cannot strike, hardly can fly

Things are the hawks' food and noble
is the mountain, Oh noble
Pico Blanco, steep sea-wave of marble.

First printed in December of 1934 (about one year before Solstice), "Return" is powerful evidence of the resurgence of Jeffers' pantheism. Reverence for nature and for nature's articulation with God are once again a major theme for Robinson Jeffers. Rapidly accelerating toward the Second World War, the human world and its trappings becomes less attractive to Robinson Jeffers. Immediately before that red bubble will burst, Jeffers will issue in 1937 Such Counsels You Gave to Me and Other Poems, and with it his finest short poems on nature and on nature's God.

Jeffers of course was not alone in sensing the oncoming inevitable violence of the next great conflict, but in Such Counsels You Gave to Me he stresses again that even in a world on the brink of mayhem God is everywhere to be found--though men, like the drunkard in "New Year's Eve", in the stupor of their self-delusions, are unaware of God:

The star's on the mountain, the stream snoring in flood;
the brain-lit drunkard
Crosses midnight and stammers to bed.
The inhuman nobility of things, the ecstatic beauty,
the inveterate steadfastness
Uphold the four posts of the bed.
(Nobody knows my love the falcon.)

Just as the dove is one of the symbols of Christianity, Jeffers has chosen the falcon (as in "New Year's Eve") as the symbolic

bird of his conception of God.

Although deeply concerned with the present violence of his own day, Jeffers in section one of the four-part poem "Hellenistics" considers the Greeks' relationship with the God of the world. God was well-known to the ancient Greeks, Jeffers concludes, but they did not have a monopoly on him. His presence is everywhere to be felt, even in the scene from Jeffers' own house:

I am past childhood, I look at this ocean and the fishing
birds, the streaming skerries, the shining water,
The foam-heads, the exultant dawn-light going west, the
pelicans, their huge wings half folded, plunging like
stones.

Whatever it is catches my heart in its hands, whatever it
is makes me shudder with love
And painful joy and the tears prickle ... the Greeks were
not its inventors. The Greeks were not the inventors

Of shining clarity and jewel-sharp form and the beauty of
God. He was free with men before the Greeks came:
He is here naked on the shining water. Every eye that has
a man's nerves behind it has known him.

It is inevitable in this evaluation that man will encounter God. If all men indeed do encounter such a magnificent God, why do so few see him lastingly in his splendor? Jeffers answers the question in the final lines of "Hellenistics". After his consideration of the ancient Greeks, Jeffers mentions the human condition of "the dull welter of Asia" and "the squalid savages along the Congo" as well as the precarious European situation in 1937. Coming to the human future which Jeffers foresees as a "new barbarism", Jeffers warns the "distant

future children" against the institutionalization of their reverence for God:

... what power can save you from the real evils
Of barbarism? What poet will be born to tell you to hate
cruelty and filth? What prophet will warn you
When the witch-doctors begin dancing, or if any man
says "I am a priest," to kill them with spears?

Continuing in this individualistic vein, Jeffers suggests a solution "for each man" for his own religious needs, in "Going to Horse Flats". No use trying to save the world: "it is certain the world cannot be saved." But the individual can find a manner of salvation by finding God. The method of this encounter elucidated, Robinson Jeffers concludes "Going to Horse Flats" by sadly admitting that "men instinctively rebel against" the real God who will, however, gather them in upon death.

... Man's world is a tragic music
and is not played for man's happiness,
Its discords are not resolved but by other discords.
But for each man
There is a real solution, let him turn from himself and man
to love God. He is out of the trap then. He will
remain
Part of the music, but will hear it as the player hears it.
He will be superior to death and fortune, unmoved by
success or failure. Pity can make him weep still,
Or pain convulse him, but not to the center, and he can
conquer them ... But how could I impart this
knowledge
To that old man?

Or indeed to anyone? I know that all
men instinctively rebel against it. But yet
They will come to it at last.
Then man will have come of age; he will still suffer and
still die, but like a God, not a tortured animal.

As World War Two approaches, Robinson Jeffers realizes how hollow are the faiths men place in institutionalized beliefs. In "Air-Raid Rehearsals" Jeffers notifies humanity in advance that the religious and political institutions of the day would not perform as they promise: "... and neither Christ nor Lenin will save you." Robinson Jeffers concludes the poem by wishing that the world could have found more secure values in time to avoid bloodshed.

I wish you could find the secure value,
The all-heal I found when a former time hurt me to
the heart,
The splendor of inhuman things: you would not be
looking at each other's throats with your knives.

In "Thebaid" Jeffers mocks the false faiths of his day:

An age of renascent faith: Christ said, Marx wrote,
Hitler says,
And though it seems absurd we believe.
Sad children, yes. It is lonely to be adult, you need
a father.
With a little practice you'll believe anything.

With the rest of the world confused by the maelstroms of its conflicting faiths, Robinson Jeffers imagines himself as the last man on earth to see things clearly.

--I see the sun set and rise
And the beautiful desert sand
And the stars at night,
The incredible magnificence of things.
I the last living man
That sees the real earth and skies,
Actual life and real death.
The others are all prophets and believers
Delerious with fevers of faith.

Perhaps Jeffers was right, for the many faiths which went into the second great war's making have produced little lasting good. Toward the end of his life (in the spiritual emptiness of the 1960's) Robinson Jeffers reaffirmed his old vision of himself as the lone, solitary sane figure in a deluded world by writing an unpublished poem entitled "The Last Conservative". In a world of political and environmental lunacy Jeffers foresees that his death will leave the world with no one of sound judgment. In "Thebaid" Robinson Jeffers survives as the last neutral man able to see the world in its native indifferent state.

Sprinkled throughout his career, Robinson Jeffers wrote accurate poetic self-evaluations; one of the best of these occurs in Such Counsels You Gave to Me under the appropriate title of "Self-Criticism in February". The poem is an imagined dialogue between Jeffers and a perceptive critic of Jeffers' poetry. Revealingly, Jeffers places his critic's comments in italics as indication that his own veracity which has appeared over the years under standard type has not lost its meaning. The critic objects to the excessive violence in Jeffers' poetry to which charge the poet replies: "But the present time is not pastoral..." The critic objects to Jeffers' too frequent use of phantom-like characters to which Jeffers rejoins: "How often life's are--". But the gravest fault his critic can find with Jeffers' poems is their basic theology of a neutral God:

And now
For the worst fault: you have never mistaken

Demon nor passion nor idealism for the real God.
Then what is most disliked in those verses
Remains most true. Unfortunately. If only you could
sing
That God is love, or perhaps that social
Justice will soon prevail. I can tell lies in prose.

Jeffers' intense passion for telling the truth as he sees it in poetry is reasserted in this poem. Out of allegiance to this truth-in-poetry principle, Robinson Jeffers is not able to pretend faith in Christianity nor is he interested in the socialist-communist promise of utopia around-the-corner. The truth lies somewhere outside of the human dilemma in the "storm-beauty" of "the real God."

In 1938 Random House issued a 615 page volume entitled The Selected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers, the capstone of Jeffers' career to date. About one-half of Jeffers' published work was included in the book. Selected Poetry contains representative work chosen by Jeffers from Tamar of 1924 to Such Counsels of 1937; four new poems are also included. The book has the distinction of being the only volume of Jeffers' which Random House, his publishers, bothered to keep in print over the years. By 1959 Selected Poetry had been reprinted (each reprinting in sizeable quantities) eleven times, a left-handed recognition of the lack of intelligent publishing effort on the part of Random House's executives and a tribute to the persistent interest of American poetry readers and students who had to purchase this (by then) highly incomplete volume or read no Jeffers at all.

Two of the four new poems in Selected Poetry are of theological interest. "Shiva" is a sonnet, Jeffers' last, the title of which is a reference to the Hindu goddess of destruction and of reproductive restoration. Both the attributes of Shiva are included in the poem which considers the eventual climax and conclusion of the Christian age. "Shiva" is only superficially relevant to Hinduism, as Jeffers uses the Indian deity as a vehicle for his own monistic ideas. The poet intuitively senses the distant extermination of human liberty, appraises the vanities of human arts and sciences and ultimately predicts the end of the present universe. Already, Jeffers notes, "the hawk that is picking the birds out of our sky" has

...killed the pigeons of peace and security,
She has taken honesty and confidence from nations and men.

Jeffers does not gloat over the destruction of the features and foundations of the present universe, but remains steadfastly confident that his monistic conception of "empty darkness" will be able, phoenix-like, to recreate another universe in the cycles of time.

This is the hawk that picks out the stars' eyes.
This is the only hunter that will ever catch the wild swan;
The prey she will take last is the wild white swan of the beauty of

things.

Then she will be alone, pure destruction, achieved and supreme,

Empty darkness under the death-tent wings.

She will build a nest of the swan's bones and hatch a new brood,

Hang new heavens with new birds, all be renewed.

Jeffers' supreme faith in the monistic source of the universe is summed up in the final couplet of the sonnet.

One suspects that Robinson Jeffers paid careful attention to his choices for final poems in his volumes of verse. As partial confirmation of this contention, we have Jeffers' final poem of his Selected Poetry: "Theory of Truth", one of Jeffers' most important religious poems. To avoid ambiguity and to reiterate his personal regard for his misunderstood Werk seines Lebens, The Women at Point Sur, Jeffers subtitled the poem "(Reference to Chapter II, The Women at Point Sur)". The two page poem is a painstakingly personal investigation into two fundamental human questions: how have the three most persistent and successful human seekers of truth arrived at their answers, and how should men live in the world.

It is significant that Robinson Jeffers in "Theory of Truth" does not consider scientists as the most important seekers of truth. Outstanding scientific discoverers were omitted not because Jeffers had no regard for the truths of science--on the contrary, Robinson Jeffers of all the modern poets of merit is most interested in and influenced by contemporary science. In addition, Jeffers had studied in some depth a wide range of the sciences, kept up with the contemporary scientific advances, and had an eminent mathematician-astronomer as a brother. For all his interest in science, Robinson Jeffers once referred in verse to modern science with the phrase "as unnecessary as our sciences". Jeffers felt that while sci-

ence answered some important questions, the even more important questions of human existence were tackled by the great religious thinkers as identified in "Theory of Truth": Lao-tze, Jesus, and Buddha.

In Robinson Jeffers' view, these three great men did finally find truth--but only after intense personal torment. Jeffers' theory of truth is that only an agonizing personal trauma (closely related to insanity) initiates the search for ultimate truth. Once found, the real truth uncovered is polluted by the insanity which prompted its original discovery. In Robinson Jeffers' words:

...Because only
tormented persons want truth.
Man is an animal like other animals, wants food and suc-
cess and
women, not truth. Only if the mind
Tortured by some interior tension has despaired of hap-
piness:
then it hates its life-cage and seeks further,
And finds, if it is powerful enough. But instantly the
private
agony that made the search
Muddles the finding.

Jeffers goes on to identify the "private agony" of the three pre-eminent world religious leaders: Lao-tze "envied the chiefs of / the provinces of China their power and pride"; Jesus "was born a bastard, and among the people / That more than any in the world valued race-purity"; Buddha was

A man who loved and pitied with such intense comprehension
of
pain that he was willing to annihilate

Nature and the earth and stars, life and mankind, to annul the suffering.

All three of the men were powerful enough to find God and truth. When they did, they mixed their private impurities with their new-found wisdom and bequeathed to posterity their great truths, flawed by the limitations of their own personalities. Robinson Jeffers concludes the poem by asking if the search for truth is forever doomed to such personal contamination:

Then
search for truth is foredoomed and frustrate?
Only stained fragments? Until the mind has turned its love
from
itself and man, from parts to the whole.

The poet's position is that as long as humans insist on living in an anthropocentric universe, man's search for God will be stained by human fixations. Jeffers' hope is that since God is eternally present in his creation, one day man will climb out of his self-made pit and encounter as best he can the ultimate truth of God. Robinson Jeffers' position is deeply influenced by modern geology and astronomy, the two sciences most directly responsible for giving man a farther vision of the universe. Geological time and astronomical distance have, in Jeffers' view, made man's self-importance something less than consequential. These two discoveries will force men in the future to assess much more accurately their true position, and luckily some future man will experience the God who is

closer to physical reality than the human-centered deities of the great religions of the Orient: Taoism, Buddhism, Christianity.

The Middle Years: God

A Summary

Robinson Jeffers' publications between the years of 1924 and 1938 present a substantial, though not yet complete, consideration of his conception of God. The original pantheism present in Jeffers' Californians volume of 1916 is given additional authenticity by Jeffers' mystic encounter with his God as evidenced in Jeffers' poems beginning with Roan Stallion of 1925. Many of the basic aspects of Jeffers' conception of God in his mature works are already present as fledgling ideas in Californians. The poet's God does not seem to alter much during Jeffers' middle years; he becomes better defined and expressed in verse. During this time Robinson Jeffers had both the time and opportunity to consider his God and the means to express his theological convictions in the form of poetry to the public.

With the adverse reception of Jeffers' long theological narrative, The Women at Point Sur, and--more importantly--with his increasing aversion for the mass of humanity in general, Robinson Jeffers, at the height of his reknown in the early

and mid-1930's, drastically reduced his publication of short poems of a theological nature. It was only the distant yet certain possibility of another world war which prompted the poet (out of compassion for mankind and out of personal need to express his faith in his God) once again to present his theological notions in verse. These short theological poems of the late 1930's are among Jeffers' most concise in praise of his God. With the actual outbreak of war, Jeffers' theological verse underwent a sort of paralysis. Robinson Jeffers seemed then almost unwilling to write of his God except to affirm God's ability to steer men through the worst hours of their folly.

A more precise definition of Robinson Jeffers' pantheism is in order to distinguish it from that of the Orient. In his Library of Congress appearance in 1941 Jeffers himself felt constrained to make such a distinction in these words, printed in 1956 as Themes in My Poems:

Another theme that has much engaged my verses is the expression of a religious feeling, that perhaps must be called pantheism, though I hate to type it with a name. It is the feeling ... I will say the certitude ... that the world, the universe, is one being, a single organism, one great life that includes all life and all things; and is so beautiful that it must be loved and revered; and in moments of mystical vision we identify ourselves with it.

This is, in a way, the exact opposite of Oriental pantheism. The Hindu mystic finds God in his own soul, and all the outer world is illusion. To this other way of feeling, (Jeffers') the outer world is real and divine; one's own soul might be called an illusion, it is so slight and transitory.

Jeffers' vision of reality is squarely located in this world, not in an abstract spirituality or in a personalized other world of spirits, demons, angels or sub-deities. Jeffers' pantheism is firmly fixed in the material, phenomenological world. Human consciousness, the only known entity aware of its existence in such a world, should realize its minute importance and act in accordance with the multiform evidences of a God who, like Fate, set the universe in motion and scrupulously sees to it that everything done under the sun conforms to his will.

Robinson Jeffers' pantheism is firmly based in the material world. Materialistic pantheism might be a designation for Jeffers' religious feelings were it not for the misleading connotations of the word materialism and the conventional notions attached to the word pantheism. If a link can be made between Jeffers' form of pantheism and other pantheistic dogmas, that link must not be made to Oriental pantheism; it can, perhaps, be remotely identified with some of the religious aspects of American Indian nature worship.

Although not yet overtly stated, Jeffers also looks forward to a day when men will be much more humble, in tune with "the beauty of things", the natural world of God's making. In his final years--sadly--Jeffers lived to see man deviate even farther from such a goal.

The Middle Years (1924-1940): Man

Anyone who thinks long on the most important topic in the world, the existence and attributes of God, must invariably come to form a concomitant doctrine or opinion of man. The quantitative evidence from Robinson Jeffers' Californians seems to indicate that Jeffers was primarily concerned with theological matters in that volume and only incidentally occupied with any penetrating thoughts on the nature and propensities of man. In Tamar of 1924 and in Roan Stallion, Tamar of the following year, Jeffers begins to reveal more of his ideas on the subject of man's place in nature and even on the meaning of human existence on this planet. What is the nature of man as seen by the mature Jeffers?

The poems of Roan Stallion, Tamar carry Jeffers' misanthropy one logical step further. The two major notions on man in the book are man's comparative insignificance in the natural world and the eventual death of the human species. "Granite and Cypress" introduces these themes by stating the relative instability of man as compared to the two most impressive and lasting presences on the Monterey Peninsula:

(I have granite and cypress,
Both long-lasting,
Planted in the earth; but the granite sea-boulders are prey
to no hawk's wing, they have taken worse pounding,
Like me they remember

Old wars and are quiet; for we think that the future is one
piece with the past, we wonder why tree-tops
And people are so shaken.)

Jeffers' sui generis view of humanity is that of a semi-inter-
ested yet detached outsider. Robinson Jeffers has already
found his unique theological relationship with God, and it
fundamentally affects his attitude toward man.

Like many of Jeffers' poems, "Boats in a Fog" is a con-
trast between the steadfastness of the natural world and the
insignificance of the strictly human preoccupations. Compared
to nature even the best man can muster is of little worth:

Sports and gallantries, the stage, the arts, the antics of
dancers,
The exuberant voices of music,
Have charm for children but lack nobility; it is bitter
earnestness
That makes beauty; the mind
knows, grown adult.

Human culture in Robinson Jeffers' opinion is sadly inadequate
compared to the "bitter earnestness" of nature.

... all the arts lose
virtue
Against the essential reality
Of creatures going about their business among the equally
Earnest elements of nature.

To Jeffers, the human arts are a futile effort to escape from
the somber eloquence of the natural and non-human world. Cul-
ture is a cunningly decorated screen placed by man between man
and nature and--ultimately--the God of nature. In the context
of the real natural world, the arts are ignoble and grotesque.

In "Boats in a Fog" Robinson Jeffers does not denigrate simple and essential human toil, however. On the contrary, Jeffers considers the fishing activity of the poem to be as earnest and essential as the harbor fog through which the boats drift. These fishermen encounter God in their occupation and are more noble in fact than the arts which only glorify man.

"Vices" continues the anti-culture theme. Carmel in 1925 was filling with the idle rich and the puttering artist types for which it suddenly became notorious. "Vices" is Robinson Jeffers' reaction to the feverish attempt to instill the human creator's "vices" in his works of art. Those who lack "talent" merely applaud, and the whole ridiculous spectacle continues on in a vortex for generations. In contrast to the frenetic nature of the local artists, Robinson Jeffers describes himself as cold, tranquil, 'unagitatable' and 'earthfast'--everything an artist was not supposed to be in the frantic mid-twenties of this century.

VICES

Spirited people make a thousand jewels in verse and prose,
and the restlessness of talent
Runs over and floods the stage or spreads its fever on
canvas.
They are skilled in music too, the demon is never satisfied,
they take to puppets, they invent
New arts, they take to drugs ... and we all applaud our
vices.
Mine, coldness and the tenor of a stone tranquility; slow
life, the growth of trees and verse,
Content the unagitatable and somewhat earthfast nature.

Robinson Jeffers admires only the ancient art of a versification

firmly planted in the natural world.

Two of the poems found in Roan Stallion, Tamar concern themselves with present and future human over-population. In "People and a Heron" Jeffers, after seeing a large crowd on Carmel Beach, later in the evening observed a lone heron and wonders "why a lone bird was dearer to me than / many people." Robinson Jeffers concludes that "rare is dear", the bird far more rare than humans in a crowd.

"Haunted Country" forecasts the growth of population in Carmel and the adjacent bit of coastline. In a note written in 1930 on the subject Robinson Jeffers wrote:

--But this was about my own thoughts being over-populated. The growth of this village (Carmel) was forecast in "Haunted Country" in the Roan Stallion book -- but it needed no prophet. --R.J.

In "Haunted Country" Jeffers surveys the future of his region with dismay and with resignation:

The inhuman years to be accomplished,
The inhuman powers, the servile cunning under pressure,
In a land grown old, heavy and crowded,
There are happy places that fate skips; here is not one of
 them;
The tides of the brute womb, the excess
And weight of life spilled out like water, the last migration
Gathering against this holier valley-mouth
That knows its fate beforehand, the flow of the womb,
 banked back
By the older flood of the ocean, to swallow it.

Robinson Jeffers predicts that the final westering migration

of man will gather on his shores and that this mass will finally be obliterated by the even "older flood of the ocean".

The poem immediately following "Haunted Country" is "Autumn Evening". With the immense natural beauties of clouds, probable rain storms, a heron and "Jupiter ... for evening star" Robinson Jeffers expresses his supreme confidence, not in man, but in God's world:

The sea's voice worked into my mood, I thought "no matter
What happens to men ... the world's well made though."

The answer to manifold human problems is the native solace of the well-made world of nature.

In 1925 Robinson Jeffers' two sons were nine years of age. In "Shine, Perishing Republic" the poet cautions his young sons

... be in nothing so moderate as in love of man, a
clever servant, insufferable master.

Behind this warning lies Jeffers' deep distrust for men in the mass. As father, the poet wants his boys to avoid "the trap that catches noblest spirits"--the trap of making man the center of one's existence.

In the poem "Joy" Robinson Jeffers records the typical human reaction to the poet's advice on emotional excesses. The poem echoes the classical Greek admonition: Nothing too

much.

JOY

Though joy is better than sorrow joy is not great;
Peace is great, strength is great.
Not for joy the stars burn, not for joy the vulture
Spreads her gray sails on the air
Over the mountain; not for joy the worn mountain
Stands, while years like water
Trench his long sides. "I am neither mountain nor bird
Nor star; and I seek joy."
The weakness of your breed: yet at length quietness
Will cover those wistful eyes.

Human vanity, in Jeffers' estimation, is bent on self-fulfilling pleasures which are not the foundation on which to build an intelligent life. Robinson Jeffers admires mental composure or physical and mental strength in place of solipsistic self-gratification. No matter, though, if most humans choose joy for their life's foundation; in due course death will bring quietness to human beings who in life never adequately experienced a balanced emotional state.

"Practical People" is a Jeffers criticism of misapplied and overly civilized pragmatism. The many cycles of nature--the tides, the birth and death of stars, the waxings and wanings of human cultures--"Make it a difficult world . . . for practical people." The message is clear: there are magnificent natural phenomena which have nothing whatsoever to do with mankind; these phenomena cannot be put to a single utilitarian human purpose. The world, as these phenomena demonstrate, was not made expressly for man. Should anyone be so unfortunate as to

think so, he will find "it a difficult world", for he is out of tune with the world he vainly seeks to tame for humanity.

All the same, Robinson Jeffers does not think that human lives are undirected quirks of chance. In the poem "Woodrow Wilson (February, 1924)" the deceased president is having a revelatory conversation with a presence which could be described as a vocalization of Fate. The presence corrects the ex-president as to the real purpose of his and other men's lives:

...you and all men are drawn
out of this depth
Only to be these things you are, as flowers for color, fal-
cons
for swiftness
Mountains for mass and quiet. Each for its quality
Is drawn out of this depth.

People's lives do have a purpose, one known only to fate; that purpose may well be entirely different than the purpose imagined by the individual himself. Robinson Jeffers does not accept a haphazard universe; on the contrary, fate organizes things down to the point of having a purpose for each individual's life.

"Science" is the first Robinson Jeffers poem to feature the poet's idea that man is unduly concerned with himself. The first three words, "Man, introverted man", present Jeffers' key idea that mankind is obsessed with its own successes, problems and agonies, obsessed to the point of spiritual illness. As an example of this illness, Robinson Jeffers chooses modern science, which, for all its benefits to humanity, will eventually become,

not man's neutral play-thing, but his painful torturer. The knowledge man has wrested from nature, the erstwhile advantage he has obtained for his species because of this knowledge has already taken its toll on humans in the 1920's. Ultimately this unnatural knowledge will prove man's undoing.

(Man) Like a maniac with self-love and inward conflicts
cannot
manage his hybrids. (scientific novelties)
Being used to deal with edgeless dreams,
Now he's bred knives on nature turns them also inward: they
have thirsty points though.
His mind forebodes his own destruction.

Robinson Jeffers as man and poet had an acute sense of the balance of nature. On one of his visits to Ireland the poet carried with him a small pebble from the beach before Tor House. When asked about it, Jeffers explained that a friend had brought him a stone of similar size from Ireland a few years previous and now by returning such a pebble Jeffers was ensuring that he would not leave the world out of balance.

"Science" concludes with two lines which reflect this deep-rooted respect for the balance of nature which man has disrupted through his scientific investigations:

A little knowledge, a pebble from the shingle,
A drop from the oceans: who would have dreamed this
infinitely little too much?

Robert Frost's poem "There Are Roughly Zones" from his 1936 volume A Further Range also expresses couched alarm at man's seemingly incautious and unthinking manipulations of nature. Both poets are able to conceive of a day when these human

manipulations will backfire.

"The Torch-Bearers' Race" develops a theme already stated in "Haunted Country". Fascinated by human migrations, Robinson Jeffers considers the future of humanity in the final lines of "The Torch-Bearers' Race", wondering what will--after an unimaginably successful future--finally bring the human species to extinction. The fact that men exist is certain evidence that one day they will not exist. The poet asks the men of the future humbly to recall their origins and die nobly, returning to the "one fountain".

... When the ancient wisdom is
folded like a wine-stained cloth and laid up in dark-
ness.
And the old symbols forgotten, in the glory of that your
hawk's dream
Remember that the life of mankind is like the life of a man,
a flutter from darkness to darkness
Across the bright hair of a fire, so much of the ancient
Knowledge will not be annulled. What unimaginable op-
ponent to end you?
There is one fountain
Of power, yours and that last opponent's, and of long peace.

"Gale in April", "The Cycle", "Continent's End", and "The Coast-Range Christ" are four other short poems from Roan Stallion which also consider at length the implications of human migration over the face of the earth.

"Point Joe" reveals Robinson Jeffers in a more generous attitude toward mankind; the poem grants that man, when engaged in the "permanent things" of necessary food gathering, has a dignity and an assured place in the natural setting. The

poem's subject is "an old Chinaman gathering seaweed / from the sea-rocks" of Point Joe, a site often mistaken in the sailing days as the entrance to Monterey Harbor--with fatal results. Humanity in harmony with nature has a place under the sun:

Man gleaning food between the solemn presences of land
and
ocean,
On shores where better men have shipwrecked, under fog
and among flowers,

Equals the mountains in his past and future; that glow
from the earth was only
A trick of nature's, one must forgive nature a thousand
graceful subtleties.

"To the Stone-Cutters" is probably Robinson Jeffers' best known single poem. It was one of the poet's favorite short poems and certainly is a characteristic work. The subject of the poem is the human wish to make permanent some small aspect of one's existence before death. The search for immortality is ultimately frustrated in Jeffers' view, but there is a small hope that, for a time, one can in his chosen field extract a fragment of immortality from oblivion.

TO THE STONE-CUTTERS

Stone-cutters fighting time with marble, you
foredefeated
Challengers of oblivion
Eat cynical earnings, knowing that rock splits,
records fall down,
The square-limbed Roman letters
Scale in the thaws, wear in the rain. The
poet as well
Builds his monument mockingly;
For man will be blotted out, the blithe earth
die, the brave sun

Die blind, his heart blackening:
Yet stones have stood for a thousand years,
 and pained thoughts found
The honey of peace in old poems.

This theme of making "something more equal to the centuries" is further elaborated in the second to last poem of Roan Stallion, Tamar and Other Poems, "Wise Men in their Bad Hours". Robinson Jeffers identifies the wise as being separate from the masses of grasshopper-like humanity. The grasshoppers are probably an allusion to the grasshopper and the ant fable. "In moments of mockery", even the wise may envy the mindless and easily-led masses, but the wise sincerely know that personal integrity and strength are infinitely preferable to thoughtless men caught up in their "thirty-year" breeding cycles. Jeffers thought highly of this poetic assessment of the majority of humanity--to the extent that "Wise Men in their Bad Hours" was one of the few early poems he chose to read in his 1941 Harvard University appearance, now preserved on record. (In 1937 in his sonnet "Hope Is Not for the Wise" Robinson Jeffers continued contrasting the few wise men in the world to the folly of many.) The posture of separateness was necessary to Jeffers the poet in order to attain a detached yet informed critical view of humanity.

WISE MEN IN THEIR BAD HOURS

Wise men in their bad hours have envied
The little people making merry like grasshoppers
In spots of sunlight, hardly thinking

Backward but never forward, they somehow
Take hold upon the future they do it
Half asleep, with the tools of generation
Foolishly reduplicating
Folly in thirty-year periods; they eat and laugh too,
Groan against labors, wars and partings,
Dance, talk, dress and undress; wise men have pretended
The summer insects enviable;
One must indulge the wise in moments of mockery.
Strength and desire possess the future,
The breed of the grasshopper shrills, "What does the future
Matter, we shall be dead?" Ah, grasshoppers,
Death's a fierce meadowlark: but to die having made
Something more equal to the centuries
Than muscle and bone, is mostly to shed weakness.
The mountains are dead stone, the people
Admire or hate their stature, their insolent quietness,
The mountains are not softened nor troubled
And a few dead men's thoughts have the same temper.

The picture of man which Robinson Jeffers presents in Roan Stallion, Tamar is not a flattering one. If one is seeking sympathy for humanity, it is not to be found. Humans in Roan Stallion, Tamar do figure in the poems, but more as stylized, abstracted agonists than pitiable protagonists. The real subject matter is the splendor of nature; the lessons drawn from nature may in some far off day be of humbling benefit to the race. Robinson Jeffers' concern was to write the truth of humanity's willfully self-distorted existence. Such a truth, he knew full well, is never relevant to "grasshopper" people for it does not tell them things their ears itch to hear. Vis à vis humanity, Robinson Jeffers--by his nature and philosophy--has been placed in a Cassandra-like position: telling the ultimate truth to incredulous "grasshoppers" who "hardly think ... / Backward but never forward". This position will become increasingly wearisome to the poet. For nearly a decade his

future verse will carefully avoid the quantity of direct censorious reference to humanity present in Roan Stallion, Tamar and Other Poems.

The fifteen poems Robinson Jeffers submitted for the 1927 volume American Poetry 1927 A Miscellany are largely personal and topical. The sonnet "Compensation" celebrates Jeffers' preference for solitude in the presence of immense natural beauty. It is solitude, not loneliness, which provides Jeffers the perspective to see that even in humanity there is beauty and a measure of goodness--"from the mountain-side of solitude." The overwhelming imagery of the poem is wholesomely natural so that the final couplet, by virtue of its freshness, makes a lasting impact on the reader.

COMPENSATION

Solitude that unmakes me one of men
In snow-white hands brings singular recompense,
Evening me with kindlier natures when
On the needled pinewood the cold dew's condense
About the hour of Rigel fallen from heaven
In wintertime, or when the long night tides
Sigh blindly from the sand-dune backward driven,
Or when on stormwings of the northwind rides
The foamscud with the cormorants, or when passes
A horse or dog with brown affectionate eyes,
Or autumn frosts are pricked by earliest grasses,
Or whirring from her covert a quail flies.
Why, even in humanity beauty and good
Show, from the mountainside of solitude.

Cawdor of 1928 finds Robinson Jeffers retreating increasingly to "the mountainside of solitude" from which to view man.

The seven short poems which do deal with man are more distant towards things human than Jeffers' previous poems. "A Redeemer" is an outright condemnation of the misuse of the American earth. It is also a biting statement cautioning against falsely based human happiness. But "An Artist" contains Robinson Jeffers' most caustic comments on the human race in the Cawdor volume.

"An Artist" is in many ways uncharacteristic of Jeffers' work. For one thing, the poem recounts an obviously contrived incident, a practice Jeffers elsewhere in his verse scrupulously avoids. Thus, in spite of the intensity of feeling in the poem, there is also an air of forced and strident machination present. "An Artist", while not one of Jeffers' best poems (lacking as it does the stamp of Jeffers' personal experience), does reveal--through the protesting voice of the artist--some of Jeffers' growing dislike for man. The sculptor contrasts man's actuality with his potentiality:

What I see is the enormous beauty of
things, but what I attempt
Is nothing to that. I am helpless toward that.
It is only to form in stone the mold of some ideal
humanity that might be worthy to be
Under that lightning. Animalcules that God (if he were
given to laughter) might omit to laugh at.

.....

... I have lived a little and
I think
peace marrying pain alone can breed that excellence in
the luckless race, might make it decent
To exist at all on the star-lit stone breast.

The artist presented here is excessive both in his desire for

complete privacy and in his unmitigated contempt for man. In the prose note to the John S. Mayfield private edition of "An Artist" Robinson Jeffers points out that "The poem seems to carry that (excessive artistic) independence to its logical conclusion." While not, in all likelihood, entirely agreeing with the fictionalized sculptor of the poem, Jeffers

... respect(s) him enough to keep his name and the place
secret. I hope that some other traveller
May stumble on that ravine of Titans after their maker
has died. While he lives, let him alone.

Jeffers, too, desired his privacy. In his final years he echoed the last line of "An Artist"

... While he lives, let him alone.

in the contents and title of his posthumously published poem "Let Them Alone", a brief poem which deals with the necessity of leaving the creative artist alone while alive.

"Ascent to the Sierras" is based on experience, the experience of motoring up to the Sierras (probably to Yosemite) from Carmel in the late 1920's. After imagining a fitful "thousands of years" of forays between primitive mountain and valley clansmen, Robinson Jeffers records the facts:

It is not true: from this land
The curse was lifted; the highlands have kept peace with
the valleys; no blood in the sod; there is no old sword.
Keeping grim rust, no primal sorrow. The people are all
one people, their homes never knew harrying;

The tribes before them were acorn-eaters, harmless as deer. Oh, fortunate earth; you must find someone To make you bitter music; how else will you take bonds of the future, against the wolf in men's hearts?

The history of California is, by and large, peaceful in Jeffers' view. The California Indians were docile and today there exist no artificial or geographical divisions of the people, but there exists deep within the human psyche a savagery which nature counteracts by requiring "bitter music" of man. "Ascent to the Sierras" contains Robinson Jeffers' first reference to a deep-seated flaw in human nature, a flaw which Jeffers feels is the root of human achievement and also of human sordidness, a flaw which the poet will continue to consider and contemplate in many of his future poems.

Closer to the American present of 1928 is the subject matter of the poem "Contrast" in which Robinson Jeffers contrasts his country (and its forests) to its paucity of great men. The poet sums up Americans of the day, concluding that the physical greatness of the land has not been matched by a similarly distinguished citizenry:

Our people are clever and masterful;
They have powers in the mass, they accomplish marvels.
It is possible Time will make them before it annuls
them, but at present
There is not one memorable person, there is not one mind
to stand with the trees, one life with the mountains.

In subsequent poems Robinson Jeffers will include George Washington with the names of the great political leaders of human

freedom, never will Jeffers retract his contention that America does not have "one mind / to stand with the trees" (the Sequoias). Robinson Jeffers conjectures that, since America does not seem to produce great leaders in thought or politics, and since its people are more powerful "in the mass", true human freedom in such a milieu is not secure.

"Soliloquy" is Jeffers' personal response to charges that he as poet is cruel and inhuman when writing about mankind. The poet neither apologizes for nor defends his view of man. Jeffers merely notes that a neutral view of man, however anti-human it may seem from the exterior, provides mental security and truth enough for him. Because man has become so distorted in his day, Robinson Jeffers in turn feels he must write of man in tragical terms in order to be understood. But writing of human beings in tragical terms in the twentieth century is certain create misunderstanding, misunderstanding which Jeffers is resigned to throughout his career. Indeed, Jeffers already was misunderstood by the masses whom Jeffers no longer cared to reach. "Soliloquy" concludes with a personal prophecy which was fulfilled in Jeffers' final years.

SOLILOQUY

August and laurelled have been content to speak for an
age, and the ages that follow
Respect them for that pious fidelity;
But you have disfeatured time for timelessness.
They had heroes for companions, beautiful youths to
dream of, rose-marble-fingered
Women shed light down the great lines;
But you have invoked the slime in the skull,
The lymph in the vessels. They have shown men Gods like

racial dreams, the woman's desire,
The man's fear, the hawk-faced prophet's; but nothing
Human seems happy at the feet of yours.
Therefore though not forgotten, not loved, in gray old
years in the evening leaning
Over the gray stones of the tower-top,
You shall be called heartless and blind;
And watch new time answer old thought, not a face
strange nor a pain astonishing;
But you living be laired in the rock
That sheds pleasure and pain like hail-stones.

Today Robinson Jeffers' poetry is still not fashionable, and little wonder. The "new time(s) are still answer(ing) old thought(s)".

"Hurt Hawks" features Jeffers' famous allegation that human beings in their contemporary setting are hopelessly removed from the God of the world:

You do not know him (God), you communal people, or have
forgotten him.

The second section of "Hurt Hawks" begins:

I'd sooner, except the penalties, kill a man than a hawk
but the great redtail
Had nothing left but unable misery.

Robinson Jeffers has more regard for the world and its beautiful natural creatures than for man. The statement of Jeffers preferring to kill a man before a hawk is not entirely rhetorical and yet the poet's pacifism precluded any violence on his part. The statement is an accurate reflection of Robinson Jeffers' human and natural scale of values. At least a portion of the anguish registered here is prompted by the senseless hu-

man act which wounded the "great redtail" hawk initially.

"Meditation on Saviors", the most important short poem of Cawdor, includes several key comments by Jeffers on his relationship with "the people". Dictatorship and socialism are the rewards for the people who find happiness in Caesarism:

... As for the people,
I have found my rock, let them find theirs.
Let them lie down at Caesar's feet and be saved; and he in
his time reap their daggers of gratitude.

Robinson Jeffers realizes that even his own people are a part of God and he has no wish to be alienated entirely from them, but neither should one feel sorry for the plight of the people--let alone attempt to love them. Their salvation has already been worked out by Fate. The poet's task is not to be reinvolved with the foolishnesses of the people, but to see clearly the present and the future unobstructed by current confusions.

One need not pity; certainly one must not love. But who
has seen peace, if he should tell them where peace
Lives in the world (in God's nature) ... they would be
powerless to
understand; and he is not willing to be reinvolved.

Jeffers has a low opinion of the masses indeed and has no wish to be their spiritual consultant.

The solution to each individual man's spiritual dilemma is presented in the final eight lines of "Meditation on Sav-

iors". The allusion is to the Sermon on the Mount, but the doctrine of man presented is strictly Jeffersian:

But while he lives let each man make his health in his
mind, to love the coast opposite humanity
And so be freed of love, laying it like bread on the waters:
it is worst turned inward, it is best shot farthest.

Love, the mad wine of good and evil, the saint's and
murderer's, the mote in the eye that makes its object
Shine the sun black; the trap in which it is better to catch
the inhuman God than the hunter's own image.

In Cawdor and Other Poems there is a hardening of Robinson Jeffers' attitude toward his fellow man. If Jeffers ever had any aspirations towards ennobling masses of humanity, they have vanished by 1928 never to reappear.

Robinson Jeffers, in his next volume of verse, Dear Judas and Other Poems of 1929, continues with persistency his demeaning of humanity. Section III of "The Broken Balance" provides a contrast between the native animals and birds of Jeffers' region and man who has choked his own being with self-love. The appraisal is scathing and historically accurate. The poet begins with an account of the fauna:

These (animals) live their felt natures; they know their
norm
And live it to the brim; they understand life.
While men molding themselves to the anthill have choked
Their natures until the souls die in them;
They have sold themselves for toys and protection:
No, but consider awhile: what else? Men sold for toys.

Uneasy and fractional people, having no center
But in the eyes and mouths that surround them.
Having no function but to serve and support

Civilization, the enemy of man,
No wonder they live insanely, and desire
With their tongues, progress; with their eyes, pleasure
with their hearts, death.

Their ancestors were good hunters, good herdsman and
swordsman,
But now the world is turned upside down;
The good do evil, the hope's in criminals; in vice
That dissolves the cities and war to destroy them.
Through wars and corruptions the house will fall.
Mourn whom it falls on. Be glad: the house is mined, it
will fall.

The manuscript for the poem contains Jeffers' prose summary
of these lines in the following somber thoughts:

The world turned upside down, the criminals better
than the good people; and the world's hope lying in war,
pestilence, corruption and vice, that they some day pull
down the evil house.

The human situation has not improved since Jeffers' summary
of 1929. A significant inclusion is the sentiment that "civil-
ization (is) the enemy of man". Institutions blot out opport-
unities to contact God.

Jeffers defines 'the broken balance' in section V of the
poem; the ancient balance between man and the earth has radi-
cally swung (for the moment) in favor of man. The lurch of
the pendulum appears to be all in man's favor, but in the end
humanity will be eliminated:

V

Mourning the broken balance, the hopeless prostration of
the earth
Under men's hands and their minds,

The beautiful places killed like rabbits to make a city,
The spreading fungus, the slime-threads
And spores; my own coast's obscene future: I remember
the farther
Future, and the last man dying
Without succession under the confident eyes of the stars.
It was only a moment's accident,
The race that plagued us; the world resumes the old lonely
immortal
Splendor; from there I can even
Perceive that that snuffed candle had something ... a fan-
tastic virtue,
A faint and unshapely pathos ...
So death will flatter them at last: what, even the bald ape's
by-shot
Was moderately admirable?

From the perspective of human extinction, man will appear
"moderately admirable". The interim will be obscene for the
beautiful places of the earth which will, however, outlast
humanity.

Section VI of "The Broken Balance" is subtitled 'Palin-
ode' or retraction to the above. In this section Robinson
Jeffers does admit to some good in man:

... it is barely possible that even men's
present
Lives are something; their arts and sciences (by moon-
light)
Not wholly ridiculous, nor their cities merely an offense.

Quite obviously, Robinson Jeffers considers the good in man to
be as real as it is minute; such beauty requires the reflect-
ed light of the moon in order to appreciate it. Jeffers' re-
traction (palinode) is tongue-in-cheek, at least partially so.

Using the metaphor of the ever-returning generations of

grasses Robinson Jeffers concludes that the broken balance will be brought back into equilibrium through natural forces already present in the non-human world, that nature herself, with the extinction of man, will be wholly victorious once again.

VII

Under my windows, between the road and the sea-cliff,
bitter wild grass
Stands narrowed between the people and the storm.
The ocean winter after winter gnaws at its earth, the
wheels and the feet
Summer after summer encroach and destroy.
Stubborn green life, for the cliff-eater I cannot comfort
you, ignorant which color,
Gray-blue or pale-green, will please the late stars;
But laugh at the other, your seed shall enjoy wonderful
vengeances and suck
The arteries and walk in triumph on the faces.

The ocean Robinson Jeffers does not care to prophesy for, but the future of humanity is more easily predicted. The grasses surrounding Tor House will long outlive the "troublesome race of man".

"Hands" is another consideration of the transience of man in the Big Sur region. The poem is a moving comment upon the passing of the Indian races who lived in the environs of the massive sandstone formations near "the mountain sun cup" Tassajara. Today, as in Jeffers' day, the cave paintings, white, skeletal, eerie human hands drawn in X-ray style, are clearly visible, a haunting reminder of a vanished race. In "Hands" Robinson Jeffers is saying that the human past is but prologue

to the future.

HANDS

Inside a cave in a narrow canyon near Tassajara
The vault of rock is painted with hands,
A multitude of hands in the twilight, a cloud of men's
 palms, no more,
No other picture. There's no one to say
Whether the brown shy quiet people who are dead intended
Religion or magic, or made their tracings
In the idleness of art; but over the division of years these
 careful
Signs-manual are now like a sealed message
Saying: "Look: we also were human; we had hands, not
 paws. All hail
You people with cleverer hands, our supplanners
In the beautiful country; enjoy her a season, her beauty,
 and come down
And be supplanted; for you also are human."

Robinson Jeffers evinces a singular compassion for humanity which cannot, it seems, come to appreciate its blessings. As well, "Hands" contains one of Robinson Jeffers' oft-repeated prophecies: the present white race of man will one day be replaced in "the beautiful country", California.

The short poems of Thurso's Landing, 1932, reiterate two of the ideas to be found in Dear Judas: man can only complicate and pollute what is already natural and beautiful, and man's 'great achievement', civilization, is--in Jeffers' words--only "a transient sickness".

As revealed in a considerable number of his poems over the years, the most revered place on his beloved coast was

the hill region and sea coast surrounding Sovranes Creek. This association went back for Jeffers to his early friendship with his fellow poet, George Sterling, a writer whose pantheistic influence on Robinson Jeffers was profound. After a descriptive survey of the scene at Sovranes Creek, Jeffers concludes:

No imaginable
Human presence here could do anything
But dilute the lonely self-watchful passion.

Sovranes Point, divinely sufficient unto itself, is in no need of human attention.

"November Surf" is a poem about cleansing; nature, the great heal-all purges her coast each year with the magnificent gesture of a surf "Like smoking mountains bright from the west". Under the grind of the surf "The old granite forgets half a year's (human) filth". Metaphorically Jeffers extends the cleansing action of these tides to the entire North American continent, which, encumbered with its human contamination, "envies its cliff" on the Pacific rim. The earth dreams, prophetically, that one fine day it too will be cleansed of the human element which at present only corrupts it.

But

all seasons
The earth, in her childlike prophetic sleep,
Keeps dreaming of the bath of a storm that prepares up the
long coast
Of the future to scour more than her sea-lines:
The cities gone down, the people fewer and the hawks more
numerous,
The rivers mouth to source pure; when the two-footed

Mammal, being someways one of the nobler animals, regains
The dignity of room, the value of rareness.

Man has possibilities of nobility in Jeffers' system of thought,
possibilities which cannot be explored under the heavy pressures
of over-population.

"New Mexican Mountains" (correct title: "New Mexican
Mountain") is one of the few poems which resulted from Mabel
Dodge Luhan's 'kidnapping' Jeffers to Taos Pueblo in New Mex-
ico as she had previously and successfully made off with D. H.
Lawrence. The poem is a description of a tribal dance of the
Taos Indians. Jeffers, never impressed with the Indians ("They
beat their horses"), notes that the ancient tribal traditions
are breaking down; the Indians "are growing civilized".

Only the drum is confident, it thinks the world has not
changed. Apparently only myself and the strong
Tribal drum, and the rockhead of Taos mountain, remem-
ber that civilization is a transient sickness.

Robinson Jeffers holds out the hope that the human future will
not contain the demeaning and degrading elements which in a
civilization preclude a natural contact with the earth.

The medium-length narrative "Margrave" in Thurso's Landing
is the most hopeful of the pronouncements on humanity in the
volume. Jeffers postulates that the fate of the world has a
provision in it for the brief moment of human history:

It is likely the enormous
Beauty of the world requires for completion our ghostly
increment,
It has to dream, and dream badly, a moment of its night,

The above was a favorite passage of Jeffers for he included it with an inscribed presentation copy of his new book, Thurso's Landing, in May of 1932. The passage is not overly hopeful for the human species whose "increment" is a nightmare to "the enormous beauty of the world", but in the light of Jeffers' longer narratives of the period, the passage is distinctly more hopeful.

Robinson Jeffers' prescription and prediction for the far human future is to be found, slightly fancified, in the poem "The Stone Axe" found in his next book of poems, Give Your Heart to the Hawks and Other Poems of 1933. "The Stone Axe" recounts the annals of a stone axe of "clear surfaces" already two thousand years old when it was found in Scotland just before 1815. The axe was taken to America by an immigrant and found its way first to Michigan, then to California and the museum in Monterey where it was "mislabelled / But sure of itself". With a skilful telescoping of time, Jeffers thrusts the axe into the future, imagining a time just after the collapse of western civilization. The axe, having survived the decay of two cultures, is found by members of the latest culture, the family of a primitive named Wolf: "His beautiful naked body / Was as dark as an Indian's, but he had blue eyes." Human beings will survive the collapse of our civilization to live, as our fore-

bears once did, in widely scattered family groups.

Appended to the Give Your Heart to the Hawks volume are the poems from Descent to the Dead of 1931. In "Ossian's Grave, Prehistoric monument near Cushendal, in Antrim (Ireland)" the ancient "Warrior and poet", Ossian, is presented by Jeffers as weary of life and of humanity:

We dead have our peculiar pleasures, of not
Doing, of not feeling, of not being.
Enough has been felt, enough done, Oh and surely
Enough of humanity has been.

Ossian's call is one to rest, away from the feverish activities of human existence.

In "No Resurrection" Robinson Jeffers presents his estimation of "the good life." Just as "The Stone Axe" revealed that Jeffers was more interested in the human future than the human present, so "No Resurrection" shows Jeffers' great regard for the past as opposed to a slovenly, eviscerated present. More than any other of his works Give Your Heart to the Hawks records Robinson Jeffers' abiding fascination with the human past and future. As "No Resurrection" implies, Robinson Jeffers was cut out for another century than his own:

Friendship, when a friend meant a helping
sword,
Faithfulness, when power and life were its fruits, hatred,
when the hatred
Held steel at your throat or had killed your children, were
more than metaphors.
Life and the world were as bright as knives.

But now, if I should (be resurrected) ...

.....

... I should find the old human
affections hollowed.
Should I need a friend? No one will really stab me from
behind.
The people in the land of the living walk weaponless.
Should I hate an enemy? The evil-doers
Are pitiable now. Or to whom be faithful? Of whom seek
faith?

.....

... A fool of a merchant, who'd sell good
earth
And grass again to make modern flesh.

The speaker from the grave desires "no resurrection"--at least
not into "modern flesh", a blurred and gray kind of existence
compared to that he had known in the days of the past, "bright
as knives".

In "Ghosts in England" Robinson Jeffers sets down a mono-
logue of the dead addressed to the living. Fate, the dead re-
veal, controls the living as well as the dead; death will be
welocme in its day:

... "We also," they say, "trembled in our
time. We felt the world change in the rain,
Our people like yours were falling under the wheel. Great
past and declining present are a pitiful burden
For living men; but failure is not the worm that worries
the
dead, you will not weep when you come,"
Said the soft mournful shadows on the Dorset shore.

The English of the 1930's were losing their Empire, soon to
join the legions underground which were the beckoning voices

of Robinson Jeffers' Descent to the Dead.

Solstice and Other Poems was published in 1935. In it Robinson Jeffers returned once again to comment on the American present and, like the hand writing on the wall, he found modern life wanting. In "The Cruel Falcon" Jeffers begins his criticism of modern life by noting:

In pleasant peace and security
How suddenly the soul in a man begins to die.

The body of a man may thrive under conditions of peace and plenty, but the soul withers.

By 1935 Franklin Roosevelt was entrenched in the White House, the "first hundred days" were history, and there was constant talk (though no real result) about revitalization of the economy. In "The Trap" Robinson Jeffers lampoons the type of mentality which prefers ignoble plenty, what President Roosevelt in a speech called "the new abundance", to personal integrity and individual freedom from statism.

THE TRAP

I am not well civilized, really alien here:
 trust me not.
I can understand the guns and the air-planes
The other conveniences leave me cold.

"We must adjust our economics
 to the new abundance ..."
Of what? Toys: motors, music-boxes,
Paper, fine clothes, leisure, diversion.

I honestly believe (but really an alien here:
trust me not)
Blind war, compared to this kind of life,
Has nobility, famine has dignity.

Be happy, adjust your economics to
the new abundance;
One is neither saint nor devil, to wish
The intolerable nobler alternative.

Jeffers, "really alien here: trust me not", maintains his preference for another time, another place. He senses the purpose of the guns and air-planes--conveniences for the war that is already being calculated in Washington and elsewhere--but the domestic conveniences of the soft utopia "leave me cold." The nobler alternative of neutrality in European wars and personal integrity at home is the poet's prescription for an ideal, upright, lasting freedom for America.

Although Jeffers would have preferred to remain silent and thus be more readily understood in the future, in the late 1930's he is drawn to comment increasingly on political matters. His fear for the long-term future of the republic increases. "Shine, Republic", a sequel to "Shine, Perishing Republic" of Roan Stallion, Tamar of 1925, is a refutation of the idea that the "new abundance" of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal is what free men in a free country truly need. Social prosperity, Jeffers reveals, is really the enemy of freedom. The champions of luxury will win out over the champions of liberty, and future free societies will profit by America's errors edging "their love of freedom / with contempt of luxury."

"Shine, Republic" widens a concept found in "Life from the Lifeless":

Men suffer want and become
Curiously ignoble; as prosperity
Made them curiously vile.

In "Shine, Republic" as in "Life from the Lifeless" Robinson Jeffers does not advocate ignoble poverty as a prerequisite to freedom any more than he suggests that luxury breeds a free man. Rather, Jeffers wishes for the "intolerable alternative" of a middle way: men having enough goods for sustenance, but not a glut of possessions which tend to make men vile and corrupt. Under the circumstances (likely, in Jeffers' opinion, to accelerate) outlined in "Shine, Republic", the collapse of a free America is inevitable. Perhaps these lines, while not yet fully realized, are closer to actualization today than ever:

SHINE, REPUBLIC

The quality of these trees, green height;
of the sky, shining; of water, a clear flow;
of the rock, hardness
And reticence: each is noble in its quality.
The love of freedom has been the quality of
Western man.

There is a stubborn torch that flames from Marathon
to Concord, its dangerous beauty
blinding three ages
Into one time; the waves of barbarism
and civilization have eclipsed but have never
quenched it.

For the Greeks the love of beauty, for Rome
of ruling; for the present age the passionate
love of discovery;
But in one noble passion we are one; and
Washington, Luther, Tacitus, Aeschylus,
one kind of man.

And you, America, that passion made you. You
were not born to prosperity, you were born
to love freedom.
You did not say "en masse," you said "independence."
But we cannot have all the luxuries
and freedom also.

Freedom is poor and laborious; that torch is not
safe but hungry, and often requires blood
for its fuel.
You will tame it against it burn too clearly, you
will hood it like a kept hawk,
you will perch it on the wrist of Caesar.

But keep the tradition, conserve the forms,
the observations, keep the spot sore. Be great,
carve deep your heel-marks.
The states of the next age will no doubt remember
you, and edge their love of freedom
with contempt of luxury.

Caesar, in Jeffers' usage, is symbolic of enslavement and dictatorship. It was Robinson Jeffers' conviction that only an intense and concentrated national conservatism--based on the origins of America--could preserve the country longest before its inevitable demise as a great power.

In "Ave Caesar" Robinson Jeffers presents a precedent for dictatorship--the northern Europeans who willingly placed themselves under the Roman yoke for "love of luxury". It is not possible simultaneously to be a wealthy nation and a free nation.

AVE CAESAR

No bitterness: our ancestors did it.
They were only ignorant and hopeful,
they wanted freedom
but wealth too.
Their children will learn to hope for a Caesar.
Or rather--for we are not aquiline Romans
but soft mixed colonists--

Some kindly Sicilian tyrant who'll keep
Poverty and Carthage off until the Romans arrive.
We are easy to manage, a gregarious people,
Full of sentiment, clever at mechanics,
and we love our luxuries.

Characteristically, Jeffers avoided the luxuries of electricity and a telephone in his Tor House until the late 1940's when Una became too ill to be without them. Jeffers in "Ave Caesar" predicts a spate of socialism for America ("some kindly Sicilian tyrant") before the betrayal and final loss of its freedom.

In both "Ave Caesar" and "Shine, Republic" Robinson Jeffers does not refer to the end of the world. He does postulate a new set of "Romans" to rule after the collapse of imperial America and even more distant, "the states of the next age" who will establish their freedoms on a firmer foundation than America's. Human history has many unwritten chapters.

If Robinson Jeffers terms modern day Americans "a gregarious people", in "Rearmament" the poet characterizes modern man in an equally disparaging light. The masses of humanity, already in Jeffers' day in their billions, are easily swayed by mass movements.

The beauty of modern
Man is not in the persons but in the
Disastrous rhythm, the heavy and mobile masses,
the dance of the
Dream-led masses down the dark mountain.

Here Jeffers is not championing the communist terror in Russia, the Nazi tyranny in Germany, nor the reactionary fervor in the United States. He simply states that if there is any beauty in modern man at all it is to be found--not in individuals who are smothered in "the molten mass"--but in the sad delusions of millions who unwittingly play out the roles which God prepared for them long in advance.

And what purpose is there in such mass delusion and mass destruction? Robinson Jeffers, who like cities about as well as he enjoyed wars, provides his answer in "What Are Cities For?" Without the destructions and delusions, the earth, "crying out for tragedy", would be deprived of its due, the "many beautiful (human) agonies." Perhaps, as Jeffers proposed in Thurso's Landing, God also requires this aspect of our "ghostly increment".

WHAT ARE CITIES FOR?

The earth has covered Sicilian Syracuse,
 there asphodel grows,
As golden-rod will
 over New York.
What tragic labors, passions, oppressions,
 cruelties and courage
Reared the great city. Nothing remains
But stones and a memory haunting the fields
 of returning asphodel.
You have seen through the trick to the beauty;
If we all saw through it, the trick would hardly entice
 us and the earth
Be the poorer by many beautiful agonies.

"Praise Life" is a short poem from Solstice with which Jeffers reminds us that anguish and human life go hand in hand. No utopian delusion will disguise that fact, although America has come closest to countermanding human suffering. He is a fool who promises total release from the pain and toil which make life meaningful.

PRAISE LIFE

This country least, but every inhabited country
Is clotted with human anguish.
Remember that at your feasts.

And this is not a new thing but from time out of mind,
No transient thing, but exactly
Conterminous with human life.

Praise life, it deserves praise, but the praise of life
That forgets the pain is a pebble
Rattled in a dry gourd.

Robinson Jeffers in the final short poem of Solstice,
"Flight of Swans", repeats his assertion that he has seen through
the trick to the real state of things. The poet

... knows that exactly this and not another
is the world,
The ideal is phantoms for bait,
the spirit is a flicker on a grave

Jeffers' solution for "the fugitive human race" is to find the peace and to adore the God of the world's beauties. It is not likely men will do this, but it is about time they do. There is, in Jeffers' view, no other alternative:

... Sad sons of the
stormy fall,
No escape, you have to inflict and endure;
surely it is time for you
To learn to touch the diamond within
to the diamond outside,
Thinning your humanity a little between
the invulnerable diamonds,
Knowing that your angry choices and hopes
and terrors are in vain,
But life and death not in vain; and the world
is like a flight of swans.

The phrase "sad sons of the stormy fall" alludes to the original fall of Adam only superficially. Jeffers is referring to the gulf which human consciousness has created in the human mind between the necessity for survival and the true instinct to appreciate God's splendors in the world.

The solution of the human dilemma is to thin human nature a little with the real presences of the swan-flight world. In "Sign-Post", Jeffers' "great ladder out of the pit of yourself / and man", the poet advises men to "Love God" and eventually they will be

... free, even
to become human,
But born of the rock and the air, not of a woman.

Such Counsels You Gave To Me and Other Poems of 1937 is Robinson Jeffers' last work before World War Two. Many of the themes relating to man in Jeffers' previous volume, Solstice, are reworked and reconsidered in Such Counsels. In this latest book, Robinson Jeffers was interested in defining what his

idea of the best life for a man actually was. A second theme in Such Counsels is related to political theory: how would the politics of the world affect the chances of freedom for man in the future? Jeffers' answer is as bleak in Such Counsels as it was in Solstice, although he never prophesied an immediate collapse of individual liberty, thinking rather that freedom would crumble slowly away from those who were careless in its maintenance.

The first short poem of Such Counsels, "The Coast-Road", sets the tone for the volume. Jeffers combines the two themes on man in one poem. He feels civilization, "like an old drunken whore" will come to destroy the free life of independent men, bringing with it the tyrannies, wars, degeneration, and false education which cut one's roots to the earth. Civilization, as Jeffers has written before, is the enemy of man:

I too

Believe that the life of men who ride horses, herders of
cattle on the mountain pasture, plowers of remote
Rock-narrow farms in poverty and freedom, is a good
life. At the far end of those loops of (coast) road
Is what will come and destroy it, a rich and vulgar and
bewildered civilization dying at the core,
A world that is feverishly preparing new wars, peculiarly
vicious ones, and the heavier tyrannies, a strangely
Missionary world, road-builder, wind-rider, educator,
printer and picture-maker and broad-caster,
So eager, like an old drunken whore, pathetically eager to
impose the seduction of her fled charms
On all that through ignorance or isolation might have
escaped them. I hope the weathered horseman up
yonder
Will die before he knows what this eager world will do
to his children. More tough-minded men
Can repulse an old whore, or cynically accept her drunken
kindnesses for what they are worth,
But the innocent and credulous are soon
corrupted.

The life of isolation and poverty (not starvation) is the best in a world socially, culturally and politically "dying at the core".

"Going to Horse Flats" presents a Robert Frost-like encounter by Jeffers with a news-starved old hermit. After Jeffers purposely proposes some naïve solutions to the world's problems (Christian love and savage extermination of one's foes), the hermit exits in anger, leaving Jeffers alone to ponder the nature of the human world. The world, concludes Jeffers, was not made for man, but the individual can survive intact if his heart is not beclouded with human considerations but filled with the love of God.

... Man's world is a tragic music
and is not played for man's happiness,
Its discords are not resolved but by other discords.
But for each man
There is real solution, let him turn from himself and man
to love God. He is out of the trap then. He will
remain
Part of the music, but will hear it as the player hears it.
He will be superior to death and fortune, unmoved by
success or failure. Pity can make him weep still,
Or pain convulse him, but not to the center, and he can
conquer them

Jeffers' ideas on man have often and carelessly been termed an outright hatred of man. "Going to Horse Flats" corrects this mistaken simplification by pointing out his ideas on man would make one more humane, not more bestial.

But Robinson Jeffers cherishes no illusions about the hu-

man species. In "Hellenistics" Jeffers praises the Greek thinkers for their wisdom in identifying the "three vices natural to man and no other animal". Instead of parroting the standard jargon that man is the only animal which thinks, walks upright, uses tools, has an articulate language and what not, Jeffers correctly identifies man's "qualities" on the other side of the ledger:

II

I think of the dull welter of Asia. I think of squalid
savages along the Congo: the natural
Condition of man, that makes one say of all beasts "They
are not contemptible. Man is contemptible." I see

The squalor of our own frost-bitten forefathers. I will
praise the Greeks for having pared down the shame
of three vices

Natural to man and no other animal, cruelty and filth and
superstition, grained in man's making.

This is no social Darwinism. The Greeks only "pared down"
man's unique vices; they did not eliminate them, and civili-
zation, though it tries to disguise them, only succeeds in mak-
ing man's vices more insidiously practicable.

But how to avoid the vices and lead the best life for a
man? In "The Wind-Struck Music" Jeffers chronicles a ranching
incident in the life of "old Tom Birnam", a cattleman friend of
Jeffers. The poem concludes with Jeffers' enthusiastic apprais-
al of Tom Birnam's life:

... this old man died last winter,
having lived eighty-one years under open sky

Concerned with cattle, horses and hunting, no thought
nor emotion that all his ancestors since the ice-age
Could not have comprehended. I call that a good life,
narrow, but vastly better than most.
Men's lives, and beyond comparison more beautiful; the
wind-struck music man's bones were moulded to be
the harp for.

The happiest, most adjusted man is one whose occupation is
compatible with his ancient nature. Jeffers does not subscribe
to the fascination with the novel in human amenities or occupa-
tions.

"The Beaks of Eagles" concludes with a thought related
to "The Wind-Struck Music": man has not changed in the cent-
uries since the ice-ages which produced him. Robinson Jeffers
realizes that man will and must attempt all that is possible
for him, but notes that it is also true that man was formed by
and is unalterably tuned to other times and different conditions.

It is good for

man
To try all changes, progress and corruption, powers,
peace and anguish, not to go down the dinosaur's way
Until all his capacities have been explored: and it is good
for him
To know that his needs and nature are no more changed
in fact in ten thousand years than the beaks of eagles.

The future is best experienced by a firm contact with man's
past.

The human world presents many choices most of which must
be refused by an individual who wishes to retain his integrity.
As a compensation for the treacheries of man, Robinson Jeffers

would have man remember God's beautiful presence as praised
in the final lines of "Nova":

... We cannot be sure of life for one moment;
We can, by force and self-discipline, by many refusals
and a few assertions in the teeth of fortune assure
ourselves
Freedom and integrity in life or integrity in death. And
we know that the enormous invulnerable beauty
of things
Is the face of God, to live gladly in its presence, and die
without grief or fear knowing it survives us.

Just as Robinson Jeffers' poem "Sign-Post" in Solstice is
his most concise theological distillation for man, so "The Answer"
from Such Counsels You Gave To Me gives man 'the answer'
to social confusions and deceptions. Jeffers advises a firm
neutrality when dealing with "open violence" and a sense of
proportion and balance when in the midst of calamity. Man has
his rightful place and truly knowing it, can maintain his personal
integrity in the days of mass confusion and despair.
"The Answer" ranks as one of Robinson Jeffers' clearest short
poems on his estimation of the conduct of human life.

THE ANSWER

Then what is the answer? -- Not to be deluded by
dreams.
To know that great civilizations have broken down into
violence, and their tyrants come, many times before.
When open violence appears, to avoid it with honor or
choose the least ugly faction; these evils are essential
To keep one's own integrity, be merciful and
uncorrupted and not wish for evil; and not be duped
By dreams of universal justice or happiness. These
dreams will not be fulfilled.
To know this, and know that however ugly the parts
appear the whole remains beautiful. A severed hand
Is an ugly thing, and man dismembered from the earth

and stars and his history ... for contemplation
or in fact ...
Often appears atrociously ugly. Integrity is wholeness,
the greatest beauty is
Organic wholeness, the wholeness of life and things, the
divine beauty of the universe. Love that, not man
Apart from that, or else you will share man's pitiful
confusions, or drown in despair when his
days darken.

A sense of great sorrow is prevalent in "The Purse-Seine",
the first of the short poems of Such Counsels which touches on
Jeffers' view of the socio-political scene of his day. Recall-
ing the panorama of a great city (San Francisco?) by night,
Jeffers' thoughts run to the end-time of the civilization which
produced the city:

I cannot tell you how
beautiful the city appeared, and a little terrible.
I thought, We have geared the machines and locked
all together into interdependence; we have built
the great cities; now
There is no escape. We have gathered vast populations
incapable of free survival, insulated
From the strong earth, each person in himself helpless,
on all dependent. The circle is closed, and the net
Is being hauled in. They hardly feel the cords drawing,
yet they shine already. The inevitable mass-disasters
Will not come in our time nor in our children's, but
we and our children
Must watch the net draw narrower, government take all
powers--or revolution, and the new government
Take more than all, add to kept bodies kept souls--or
anarchy, the mass-disasters.

"The Purse-Seine" makes a striking comparison between the har-
vesting of Monterey Bay sardines and the in-gathering of civil-
ized man. Jeffers is thinking of the collapse of the republic
at a time well after what would be World War Two--perhaps 1990
or so. The startling nature of the prophecies is surpassed

only by the time-table-like accuracy of the partial fulfillment of them in our time. In 1937, the end of a free America was in the long sight of Robinson Jeffers.

But in the gathering storms of the late 1930's Robinson Jeffers' immediate concern was to maintain his neutrality in tricky times. The last two lines of "The Great Sunset" provide Jeffers' method to remain neutral in precarious times:

"To be truth-bound,
the neutral
Detested by all the dreaming factions, is my errand here."

Jeffers hopes to remain neutral--in spite of the temptations and pressures to become identified with one ideology or another.

The poet's neutral stance is best exemplified in "Thebaid", a poem about the childish and false faiths of men. The moral immaturity of man is the subject of the poem.

How many turn back toward dreams and magic,
how many children
Run home to Mother Church, Father State,
To find in their arms the delicious warmth and folding
of souls.
The age weakens and settles home toward old ways.
An age of renascent faith: Christ said, Marx wrote,
Hitler says,
And though it seems absurd we believe.
Sad children, yes. It is lonely to be adult, you need
a father.
With a little practice you'll believe anything.

"Thebaid" chastises man for his gullibility and credulousness. The only hope for men seeking truth in the future may be to be-

come hermits isolated away somewhere in a "cave in the mountain" or in a cell in "the red desert". Truth, in Jeffers' reckoning, will go a-hungering while men flock to the same empty shrines they always seem eager to flock to in times of distress.

One of the three false shrines debunked in "Thebaid" is examined in detail in "Blind Horses". Communism (one version of Caesarism) is analyzed for what it is, "not quite a new" concept. The bankrupt notions of state-provided security still attract those greedy for world power. Jeffers sees through the illusory communistic idealization of the masses who, after all, lack the intelligence to conduct the most basic of activities in their own best interest. It is a sad comment on the bureaucrats in Moscow, too, that while Robinson Jeffers in 1937 in Carmel could see Joseph Stalin's grave errors, these errors could not safely be denounced until N. Khrushchev's reign decades later.

In the 1930's when hordes of the 'leading intellectuals' (Lionel Trilling, Clifton Fadiman) were blissfully fellow traveling, Robinson Jeffers was able to write "Blind Horses", the objectivity and accuracy of which is best shown for our own day by reproducing the complete veracious poem.

BLIND HORSES

The proletariat for your Messiah, the poor and many
are to seize power and make the world new.
They cannot even conduct a strike without cunning
leaders: if they make a revolution their leaders
Must take the power. The first duty of men in power: to
defend their power. What men defend
To-day they will love to-morrow; it becomes theirs,
their property. Lenin has served the revolution,
Stalin presently begins to betray it. Why? For the sake
of power, the Party's power, Caesarean power.

This is not quite a new world.
The old shepherd has been known before; great and
progressive empires have flourished before; powerful
bureaucracies
Apportioned food and labor and amusement; men have
been massed and moulded, spies have gone here
and there,
The old shepherd Caesar his vicious collies, watching
the flock. Inevitable? Perhaps, but not new.
The ages like blind horses turning a mill tread their own
hoof-marks. Whose corn's ground in that mill?

Robinson Jeffers, of course, is correct in identifying Marx-
ism-Lenonism as a religion founded upon some of the treasured
ideas of Christianity and Judaism. Age after age experiences,
almost as clock work, the returning destructions of freedom
through collectivism. "Whose corn's ground in that mill?"
Jeffers implies it is God's, God whose cycles--even in human
folly--are perceptible and, from a distance, beautiful.

Section III of "Helenistics" is Robinson Jeffers' peek at
the future of a collectivist society. Perversion of freedom is
inevitable, but, just as sure, men who "have tough hearts" will
survive group nonsense to recreate somewhere once again a free
identity for themselves. First World War Two approaches:

III

The age darkens, Europe mixes her cups of death, all the
little Caesars fidget on their thrones,
The old wound opens its clotted mouth to ask for new
wounds. Men will fight through; men have tough
hearts.

Men will fight through to the autumn flowering and
ordered prosperity. They will lift their heads in the
great cities
Of the empire and say: "Freedom? Freedom was a fire.
We are well quit of freedom, we have found prosperity."

They will say, "Where now are the evil prophets?" Thus
for a time in the age's after-glow, the sterile time;
But the wounds drain, and freedom has died, slowly the
machines break down, slowly the wilderness returns.

Freedom, the causative agent of a great society, eventually
dies and with it the society itself--not at once, but with
slow certainty.

Section IV of "Hellenistics" finds Robinson Jeffers directly addressing the "distant future children" in the beginning of a new age. He tells them they are lacking nothing that the previous civilization's gluttoned citizens enjoyed. "Freedom is laborious". But most important, the people of the new age are whole once again, not dependent upon the mind-twisters of collectivist terror. The poet does not promise them ease or relaxation, but their world will shine anew "in earnest".

IV

Oh distant future children going down to the foot of the
mountain, the new barbarism, the night of time,
Mourn your own dead if you remember them, but not for
civilization, not for our scuttled futilities.

You are saved from being little entrails feeding large
brains, you are saved from being little empty bundles
of enjoyment,

You are not to be fractional supported people but
complete men; you will guard your own heads, you
will have proud eyes.

You will stand among the spears when you meet; life will
be lovely and terrible again, great and in earnest;
You will know hardship, hunger and violence; these are
not the evils: what power can save you from the real
evils

Of barbarism? What poet will be born to tell you to hate
cruelty and filth? What prophet will warn you
When the witch-doctors begin dancing, or if any man
says "I am a priest," to kill them with spears?

The trinity of uniquely human evils (cruelty, filth, and super-
stition) unless checked early in the next age will, as in all
the others, eventually being man's greatest prospect, freedom,
to its knees.

"Night Without Sleep", the final poem of Such Counsels
You Gave to Me provides a resolution to the social and political
difficulties of the human species. Jeffers' deep faith in the
cycles of his God leads him to conclude that even the present
and future evils of man will, in time, heal. There is little
use in fighting what amounts to predestination.

The world's as the world is; the nations rearm and
prepare to change; the age of tyrants returns;
The greatest civilization that has ever existed builds
itself higher towers on breaking foundations.
Recurrent episodes; they were determined when the
ape's children first ran in packs, chipped flint
to an edge.

Jeffers thinks too of the incomparable Ventana country in
darkness with the rain gauging the canyons, and is concerned

at the damage done there too. The effects of erosion, he concludes, will be covered in time, and man's current disasters will someday also be soothed.

These wounds will heal in their time; so will humanity's.

One year after Such Counsels Jeffers had a new volume at press, The Selected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers of 1938. Only four new poems were included in the compilation; they continue chronicling the decay of the age, admire uncorrupted contemporary life, and present Robinson Jeffers' ideas on how humans can arrive at truth.

In "Decaying Lambskins" Jeffers compares our age with the many others of mankind. In engineering, astronomy and military science our age has far excelled the ages of China, Rome or Egypt. But so we have much of which to be lastingly proud?

So boastful?
Because we are not proud but wearily ashamed of this peak of
time. What is noble in us, to kindle
The imagination of a future age? We shall seem a race of
cheap
Fausts, vulgar magicians.
What men have we to show them? but inventions and appliances.
Not men but populations, mass-men; not life
But amusements; not health but medicines. And the odor:
what
is that odor? Decaying lambskins: the Christian
Ideals that for protection and warmth our naked ancestors ...
but naturally, after nineteen centuries

.....

Our civilization, the worst it can do, cannot yet destroy
itself;

but only deep-wounded drag on for centuries.

Compared to the great men of Greece and Rome, our Christian age seems to prefer borrowing these great men of antiquity than producing them anew. Jeffers sums up our age as the age of the tinkerer. The age was founded on our ancestor's hopes for a life of comfort and that mistaken notion has stained the entire epoch. Now "after nineteen centuries" the manuscripts and palimpsests of vellum are beginning to rot under our noses. The end-time is, however, centuries off still.

After a journey to Ireland, Robinson Jeffers wrote "Now Returned Home", a memoir of his travels which would not properly fit into Descent to the Dead. The vision of man here presented is sad and charged with pathos. An orphaned infant in precarious health is traveling to his new home to live on an isolated cold island with his aunt. The little family is transferred from the steamer to a curragh and the islanders recede toward their home. A sad, gray picture, but also one of humans content with their lot, making a living in great natural beauty and isolation from the corruptions of cities. Jeffers' memory of it all:

Now, returned home
After so many thousands of miles of road and ocean, all the hulls
sailed in, the houses visited,
I remember that slender skiff with dark henna sail
Bearing off across the stormy sunset to the distant island
Most clearly; and have rather forgotten the dragging
whirlpools
of London, the screaming haste of New York.

Man among the elements is man at his best.

"Theory of Truth" is the last poem of Jeffers' 'middle years'. In many ways, it is one of Robinson Jeffers' best for it combines his views of man and God in one thought-provoking poem. The view of man presented in the poem is deterministic. Jeffers asserts that man's search for truth cannot be satisfying or successful unless men first learn to uncenter their fascination with themselves. The Reverend Arthur Barclay of Jeffers' neglected "The Women at Point Sur" asked himself the three great questions which Christ, Lao-tze and Buddha must have asked:

I remember
This is the very place where Arthur Barclay, a priest in
revolt,
proposed three questions to himself:
First, is there a God and of what nature? Second, whether
there's
anything after we die but worm's meat?
Third, how should men live?

The three religious leaders found their truths but also, in Jeffers' theory of truth, stained their results with their own personal impurities. Their common error was the conception that man was the center of the universe. When this idea is eradicated, man will have a better opportunity to arrive at truth.

Then
search for truth is foredoomed and frustrate?
Only stained fragments? Until the mind has turned its love
from
itself and man, from parts to the whole.

The Middle Years (1924-1940): Man

A Summary

In the decade and a half between 1924 and 1940, Robinson Jeffers wrote much of his finest poetry. The poet's view of man during this time was faithfully recorded in harmony with Jeffers' guideline for versification, "I can tell lies in prose." Accordingly, Robinson Jeffers does not, in these or in any other poems, flatter mankind into thinking it is on the road to spiritual recovery from the disasters which would accompany the end of the Christian age. It is Jeffers' intention to tell the truth of human existence in the twentieth century. He does so from the perspective of a neutral observer who has the vistas of the past and the future before him to make more meaningful the human events of the immediate present. As poet, Robinson Jeffers takes the long view of man.

While Jeffers never wrote wildly adulatory poems in praise of man, there is in the later poems of his middle years a subtle change in emphasis from some of his ideas on man as found in Roan Stallion, Tamar. Though Jeffers insisted on an identity separate from most men in order to write his thoughts into verse, he did not, in the early years of his mature verse, become as biting in his criticisms of human shortcomings as in later years. The poet was still interested in ordering his theological universe and, to a lesser degree, in presenting

that world in his long narratives. Humanity, while it had never recovered from the gaping wounds of the Great War, did proceed to revel in the trivia of the times.

In those early days Robinson Jeffers sought to present a more sober view of the human prospect, an anti-toxin to all the frivolous happinesses of a people living like grasshoppers in a fragile little orb of sunshine. Those early poems seek to correct this short-sighted approach to life. Beneath their crusty exterior, the poems reveal a native concern by the poet for the ultimate shabbiness of men's brief lives and an even more basic love for the entire nursery of life on earth. Jeffers seeks to right the broken balance of man's disassociation from the provident earth. His approach, while at times caustic, is a well-intentioned and overdue purgation of human self-centeredness. In these early poems the poet has made his diagnosis of the human condition and tries the mildest means at his disposal to right the situation. It is only in the works of 1935 and after that Robinson Jeffers, his diagnosis now strongly reinforced by a cyclic view of history, finally is forced to conclude that the prognosis for humanity is--as he had expected from his youth--grim indeed.

But Jeffers' mature view of man is not all self-fulfilling vitriolic prophecy. The poet takes comfort in the well-integrated lives of men whose occupations are in accord with man's ancient nature. These fortunate few huntsmen and herdsman are

"well-buttoned in their skins" and demonstrate that humanity has not outgrown its dim origins in the past. Robinson Jeffers does not glorify man's past (out of an unhealthy backward escape as attempted by T. S. Eliot) or man's vanishing occupations related to the past. Jeffers' contention is that the lives of these men of nature have a message to all men, a message to avoid or at least understand the pitfalls of much of contemporary life in order to remain whole.

The middle 1930's find Jeffers realizing that very few people actually desire the truth about themselves, let alone are ready to live in accordance with the truth. The poet begins to address--more realistically--a limited audience who might partially understand the poet's intentions. Jeffers begins to talk of the individual maintaining his personal wholeness in the midst of impending mass disaster. The poet's view of most of humanity grows darker. Looking into the future, Jeffers realizes that the past will repeat itself and men will sell their greatest heritage, freedom, for socialized security and the "new abundance" of mass-produced trinkets.

Through it all, Robinson Jeffers holds out three hopes for man. Even in the midst of the creepingly socialized masses there are individuals who maintain their integrity as an inspiration for all of mankind. "Corruption is not compulsory". Secondly, the individual has the comfort of knowing that man's enemy, civilization, will not hold up under the increasing

centuries of human corruption. Eventually, after generations of turmoil and suffering, mankind will again emerge uncivilized and free. And thirdly, since there is no changing or helping the decay of the present and immediate future, the individual who has uncentered himself from humanity and its self-obsession has the greatest comfort of all, the certain knowledge that the beauties of the natural world are serenely ambivalent to human misfortune and serve to remind man that he himself is but a transient creature in the vast natural process.

Robinson Jeffers is concerned with human overpopulation since he realizes that more humanity means increased agony and accelerated corruption, "You making haste haste on decay." But the poet's single most important doctrine on man as evidenced in the poems of his productive middle years is the conviction that man is not the center of the universe. Time and again, Robinson Jeffers seeks to locate man, not out of any vindictiveness or malice, in his proper place--for mankind's ultimate good. Man is merely another creature of the world; at rare times a special creature, but nevertheless a creature dependent on his world and one who must act accordingly if he is ever to come or age or fulfill his potential. Jeffers' view of man, then, is not negative in the wider sense. True, he does not seek to ennoble man through social action or through the use of ready-made package plan salvation schemes. But Robinson Jeffers intends something much more beneficial for the race. He attempts to teach a few individuals the truth of man's existence,

a truth based on facts which--in Jeffers' view--finally are available through the discoveries of modern astronomy, biology and geology. These facts would--if recognized and assimilated--at long last make something noble of "that doll humanity."

Robinson Jeffers' vision of humanity is not idealistic. His human system allowed for short-term folly. He recognized that it would take the collapse of the Christian age for his vision ever to come to fruition, and he knew, agonizingly, that the remaining decades of his life ("Truthbound and neutral" as he planned it) would run flagrantly amuck and in violation of the best hopes he had for humanity.

The Final Years (1941-1962): God

More than any other factors, two disasters combine to influence Robinson Jeffers' final four volumes of poetry. (Medea of 1946 is not considered here as it was a printing of Jeffers' successful modern verse rendition of Euripides' drama.) The first disaster was The Second World War which left its mark on Be Angry at the Sun, 1941, and The Double Axe, 1948. Jeffers' second poignant misfortune was the death of his wife, Una, in 1950. Hungerfield, 1954, the memorial volume for Una, and even Jeffers' posthumous The Beginning and the End, 1963, are profoundly overcast with the fact of Una's death. These two disasters condition Robinson Jeffers' last poems.

Permeated with the twin sorrows of war and death, the poems of Jeffers' final years differ in tone and topic from his earlier work. The tone of Jeffers' last four volumes of verse is that of a poet with clenched teeth "steering through hell." The hallmark of Jeffers' personal code in his final years is endurance: endurance to watch his country win the war and lose its purpose; and endurance after Una's death to persevere in life until he too could join her in death. Jeffers' last volumes of poetry are more obsessed "with contemporary history" than any of his other poems. Public and personal events occupied the verse increasingly and as they did so the quality of the verse--as Jeffers himself unhappily admitted--suffered.

In the introductory "Note" to Be Angry at the Sun and Other Poems, 1941, Robinson Jeffers lamented this tendency in his recent verse:

... but I wish also to lament the obsession with contemporary history that pins many of these pieces to the calendar, like butterflies to cardboard. Poetry is not private monologue, but I think it is not public speech either; and in general is is the worse for being timely....

Yet it is right that a man's views be expressed, though the poetry suffer for it. Poetry should represent the whole mind; if part of the mind is occupied unhappily, so much the worse. And no use postponing the poetry to a time when these storms may have passed, for I think we have but seen a beginning of them; the calm to look for is the calm at the whirlwind's heart.

R. J.

Although the poems of Robinson Jeffers' final four volumes are often concerned with human affairs, they are not mediocre verse. Each volume of Jeffers' mature work has something distinct to recommend it. For example, while the lead narrative of the Such Counsels You Gave to Me did not possess the vitality of some of Jeffers' previous narratives, the lyric poems of that volume more than compensated for this variation. In Jeffers' final four books of poetry, the contemporaneousness of these poems is offset by two redeeming factors. First, many of the poems which deal with ephemeral historical events accurately predict the future instead of merely chronicling the present. Often the actual dates of composition are included to lend prophetic authenticity; by employing this approach, Robinson Jeffers often vindicates his earlier less specific, but heavily prophetic poems. Second, the poet

becomes more personal in his later poems. The 'real Robinson Jeffers' is, perhaps, more present in his final posthumous poems than in any others. Jeffers' final four volumes of poetry give us his personal thoughts, feelings and reactions to the hardships of age, war and death.

In his later poems Jeffers' praise of his God is often diminished, but confidence in his now-established theological position remains supremely unshaken. Jeffers, it is true, does praise his God in Be Angry at the Sun with a single poem ("The Excesses of God"), but this work actually appeared four years previous in Edith Greenan's Of Una Jeffers, 1937, a fond tribute to the poet's wife. Actually, "The Excesses of God" may be as old or older than 1924 when a similar title appeared in a proposed table of contents for Jeffers' unpublished precursor to Tamar, Brides of the South Wind. "The Excesses of God" is a fundamental theological statement by Jeffers, but its topic and tone are out of context in the 1941 volume, Be Angry at the Sun. Similar publishing incongruities are not rare in Jeffers' volumes of poetry; he was characteristically indifferent to a strictly chronological presentation of his poems. Robinson Jeffers was more interested in the essential and mundane task of merely presenting his works, some of which, he anticipated, might "stick in the world's thought". This poetic long view in no way detracts from the simple grace and theological insight of the chronologically misplaced poem

THE EXCESSES OF GOD

Is it not by his high superfluousness we know
Our God? For to equal a need
Is natural, animal, mineral: but to fling
Rainbows over the rain
And beauty above the moon, the secret rainbows
On the domes of deep sea-shells,
And make the necessary embrace of breeding
Beautiful also as fire,
Not even the weeds to multiply without blossom
Nor the birds without music:
There is the great humaneness at the heart of things,
The extravagant kindness, the fountain
Humanity can understand, and would flow likewise
If power and desire were perch-mates.

God is known by the superabundance of excellences he leaves behind in everything from the irridescent abalone shell to a moon-rise. This attitude of heart-felt praise for God is more in tune with the poems of Roan Stallion, Tamar than those found in Be Angry at the Sun.

"Faith" is a poem representative of Jeffers' thoughts on God and man in the early 1940's. The poem is filled with Jeffers' rejection of faith, the glue used by men to bind themselves together in common activity. As well, "Faith" is a comment on the origin and function of conventional religion. The glue of faith, Jeffers asserts in the poem, is slowly becoming unstuck and civilization as a result is decaying. Lies are required to make men work together. Is it possible, the poet asks in the final line of the poem, at last to choose a better adhesive for human conduct, a faith founded not on lies, but on truth, truth which would not come undone or tumble its adherents into war?

FAITH

Ants, or wise bees, or a gang of wolves,
Work together by instinct, but man needs lies.
Man his admired and more complex mind
Needs lies to bind the body of his people together,
Make peace in the state and maintain power.
These lies are called a faith and their formulation
We call a creed, and the faithful flourish,
They conquer nature and their enemies, they win security.
Then proud and secure they will go awhoring
With that impractical luxury the love of truth,
That tries all things: alas the poor lies,
The faith like a morning mist burnt by the sun:
Thus the great wave of civilization
Loses its forming soul, falls apart and founders.
Yet I believe that truth is more beautiful
Than all the lies, and God than all the false gods.
Then we must leave it to the humble and the ignorant
To invent the frame of faith that will form the future.
It was not for the Romans to produce Christ.
It was not for Lucretius to prophesy him, nor Pilate
To follow him....Or could we change at last and
choose truth?

The truth Jeffers recommends is a faith founded on the knowledge of the God of the world.

In the poem "Birthday" Robinson Jeffers holds out the guarded hope that men of the future may choose truth over the historical sequence of ignorance, faith, religion, civilization and decadence. Truth, says Jeffers, is always at hand:

Girls that take off their clothes, and the naked truth,
Have a quality in common: both are accessible.

Jeffers' slim hope is that mankind may one day base its associations on the readily available truth of God.

The falsehoods, propaganda and false faiths flaunted in the early 1940's make it difficult for Jeffers to praise his

God as he had done in more steady times. One of the prophetic poems of Be Angry at the Sun, "Contemplation of the Sword (April, 1938)", predicts that only the outright violence of general war will resolve the conflicts present in the human world. Robinson Jeffers addresses his complaint to his God:

Dear God, who are the whole splendor of things and the
sacred stars, but also the cruelty and greed, the
treacheries
And vileness, insanities and filth and anguish: now that
this thing (war) comes near us again I am finding it
hard

To praise you with a whole heart.

also you with a whole heart. I know what pain is, but pain can shine. I know what death is, I have sometimes

Longed for it. But cruelty and slavery and degradation,
pestilence, filth, the pitifulness
Of men like little hurt birds and animals ... If you were
only

Waves beating rock, the wind and the iron-cored earth,
the flaming insolent wildness of sun and stars,
With what a heart I could praise your beauty.

nor cancel life, nor free man from anguish
For many ages to come. You are the one that tortures him-
self to discover himself: I am
One that watches you and discovers you, and praises you
in little parables, idyl or tragedy, beautiful
Intolerable God.

This selection from "Contemplation of the Sword" serves as the best introduction to Jeffers' theological attitudes in both Be Angry at the Sun and The Double Axe. The other side of God, the violence with which God discovers himself and the human cruelty, filth and superstition unleashed on mankind and the world for a second time in Jeffers' life, makes Jeffers' praise of his God a difficult task.

In Be Angry at the Sun Robinson Jeffers does not counsel

despair, but two poems ("The Soul's Desert" and "Drunken Charlie") advocate the individual's enlightened disassociation from the follies which mankind is about to perpetrate on the earth. "The Soul's Desert (August 30, 1939)" is Jeffers' prologue to the long six years of war ahead. Man is thoroughly discredited as a source of anyone's faith; only God is left:

... Clearly it is time
To become disillusioned, each person to enter his own
soul's desert
And look for God--having seen man.

The only counsel Jeffers has to offer to man in a world of human madness is an isolated retreat to God.

"Drunken Charlie" concludes with the plaintive sentiment that the things worth fighting for are the pantheistic things of God, not man. Human notions of a sacred war are ill-informed.

Oh my dear, there are some things
That are well worth fighting for.
Fight to save a sea-gull's wings:
That would be a sacred war.

One of the final poems of the volume, "The Bloody Sire", suggests that the origin of religions is "stark violence." Christianity, thinks Jeffers, is on a rapid downward course, but a new seminal violence will, in its shock waves, create a new value system.

Who formed Christ but Herod and Caesar,
The cruel and bloody victories of Caesar?
Violence, the bloody sire of all the world's values.

Never weep, let them play,
Old violence is not too old to beget new values.

"The Bloody Sire" of Be Angry at the Sun serves as a link to Jeffers' second volume concerned with the Second World War, The Double Axe and Other Poems, 1948. Jeffers' choice of controlling symbol for the book--the double axe of ancient Crete with its dual connotations of destruction and regeneration--is indicative of his ability to view the war from more than one vantage point. The long narrative poem which begins the volume, "The Double Axe", is Jeffers' last substantial narrative. It is Jeffers' finest philosophical poem and probably his most important theological poem as well. The work has been singularly neglected but also grossly misunderstood. More than any other major work of Robinson Jeffers, "The Double Axe" cries out for intelligent criticism. The second division of the poem subtitled 'The Inhumanist' is deeply influenced by Nietzsche's Also Sprach Zarathustra; it is difficult to imagine any other modern work so closely related ideologically and stylistically to Nietzsche's work. But 'The Inhumanist' is also a summary statement on Jeffers' God before Una's death.

A cluster of twenty-seven short poems tail The Double Axe. These poems like those of Be Angry at the Sun are frequently topical in nature. "Quia Absurdum" is not topical except in its rejection of two faiths which, in Jeffers' view, helped cause the Second World War: Christianity and communism. In the poem, Robinson Jeffers gives purposely conflicting advice

in the hope that people will see out of themselves through to the God of the stars. Jeffers expands one of the themes of Such Counsels: man has foolishly insulated himself from God's earth and from God.

QUIA ABSURDUM

Guard yourself from the terrible empty light of
space, the bottomless
Pool of the stars. (Expose yourself to it: you might learn something)

Guard yourself from perceiving the inherent nastiness of
man and woman.
(expose your mind to it: you might learn something.)

Faith, as they now confess, is preposterous, an act of will.
Choose the Christian sheep-cote
Or the Communist rat-fight; faith will cover your head
from the man-devouring stars.

The poem is an exposé of misplaced faith in God and man. Jeffers identifies the faults of both false religions--Christianity and communism--as their refusal to expose themselves either to the truth of the monistic, pantheistic world (Christianity) or to the truth of the nasty nature of man (communism). In Jeffers' estimation, Christianity makes a religion of hating the world in order to find God, and communism makes a religion out of deifying man in order to avoid God. Both are in crying need of the right kind of "exposure."

Jeffers' "Pearl Harbor" assuredly predicts an American victory in the conflict which will follow. The final lines of the poem, however, turn from the "ridiculously panicked" activity of war preparations to contemplate the methods of finding

God in a confused world. The poet walks at night in the midst of the newly-proclaimed black-out and thinks of his God:

Walk at night in the black-out,
The firefly lights that used to line the long shore
Are all struck dumb; shut are the shops, mouse-dark the
houses. Here the prehuman dignity of night
Stands, as it was before and will be again. O beautiful
Darkness and silence, the two eyes that see God; great
staring eyes.

There is a touch of Jeffers' theological monism in this quotation with the mention of the "beautiful darkness" which antedated man and which will claim him at last.

"Teheran" is a remarkably accurate assessment of the sad sellout of much of the European continent to communism. Jeffers prophetically notes that after the Second War there will be only "two powers alone in the world", America and Russia. The poet is concerned that the agreements reached at Teheran are shot through with falsity and deceit, a fact obvious even at that time.

Observe also
How rapidly civilization coarsens and decays; its better
qualities, foresight, humaneness, disinterested
Respect for truth, die first; its worst will be last.--Oh
well: the future! When man stinks, turn to God.

It, of course, was neither humane nor far-sighted to hand over eastern Europe to the communists after the war. Little wonder that Robinson Jeffers' poetry has more readers today in Czechoslovakia than America; the Czechs have to live with the world as defined at Teheran. The human world "stinks" there

already. Jeffers' religious vision and allegiance to truth emerge as wholesome and beautiful in their enslaved world.

The allied invasion of northern France is the topic of "Invasion (written May 8, 1944)". Jeffers maintained a strict personal neutralism in the conduct of the war and steadfastly desired the United States to remain neutral in the European war.

Let no one believe that children a hundred years from
now in the future of America will not be sick
For what our fools and unconscious criminals are doing
today.

"Europe has run its course," wrote Jeffers and it was America's duty to "feed and defend" the lamp of freedom, not redeem the irredeemable. But the poet also sees the invasion from a religious standpoint. From his neutral stance he observes the "enormous weight" of western civilization beginning to slide to its doom. From this vantage "it is ghastly beautiful". Robinson Jeffers believes humanity should look for the beauty of God in things--even in the tragic moments of the beginning of the loss of man's freedom in this age. The poem concludes:

I believe that the beauty and nothing else is what things are formed for. Certainly the world
Was not constructed for happiness nor love nor wisdom.
No, nor for pain, hatred and folly. All these
Have their seasons; and in the long years they balance each other, they cancel out. But the beauty stands.

The poem "Greater Grandeur" is Robinson Jeffers' theologi-

cal summation of the Second World War. Having already seen one war to make the world safe for democracy, Jeffers does not subscribe to the conventional notions of the justness or worthiness of the victory. But this time, says Jeffers, the victory will be different. Fate and God now have the human world in tow and the individual can only observe the tragic drama grind on to its grim conclusion. Jeffers looks for the long-range beauty in the process rather than swim in subjective pity or terror.

GREATER GRANDEUR

Half a year after the war's end, Roosevelt and Hitler
dead, Stalin tired, Churchill rejected--here
is the
Triumph of the little men. Democracy--shall we say?--
has triumphed. They are hastily preparing again
More flaming horrors, but now it is fate, not will; not
power-lust, caprice, personal vanity--fate
Has them in hand. Watch and be quiet then; there is
greater grandeur here than there was before,
As God is greater than man: God is doing it. Sadly, im-
personally, irreversibly,
The tall world turns toward death, like a flower to the sun.
It is very beautiful. Observe it. Pity and terror
Are not appropriate for events on this scale watched from
this level; admiration is all.

Jeffers correctly predicts that what would become known as the Cold war would no longer be a jockeying for power but a struggle with fate as the referee and final victor. During and after the Second World War the human world was often chocked with cruelties and agonies. In The Double Axe Robinson Jeffers, who never forgot the beauties of the natural world, extends his theological admiration for beauty--not to the cruelties of war which he profoundly abhorred but--to the immense beauty of the

process man was acting out. That manner of epochal beauty could only come from God. Even the tragic beauty of God is worthy of "admiration".

By the end of the war Jeffers was thoroughly disillusioned with dishonest human governments. In "New Year's Dawn, 1947" Jeffers discredits human institutions and some psychological entities which normally have claims on man. He eliminates as unreliable the state, the church, human customs and traditions, scriptures and creeds, even aspects of the human conscience which might have been contaminated with human falsehoods. Jeffers concludes that the best guideline for a man is an intuition or conscience thoroughly exposed to the transhuman magnificence of God's nature.

The state is a blackmailer,
Honest or not, with whom we make (within reason)
Our accommodations. There is no valid authority
In church or state, custom, scripture nor creed,
But only in one's own conscience and the beauty of things.
Doggedly I think again: One's conscience is a trick oracle.
Worked by parents and nurse-maids, the pressure of the
people,
And the delusions of dead prophets: trust it not.
Wash it clean to receive the transhuman beauty: then
trust it.

More than ever Robinson Jeffers stood alone after the war. His youngest twin son, Garth, had been a military policeman in Germany, but had--to the great relief of his parents--returned safely with a new German bride. Jeffers had his family back intact after the war, but his neutral stance had cost him dearly. He was scrutinized by the government during the conflict

and with the publishing of The Double Axe long after the war's conclusion in 1948, the poet's own normally tepid publisher, Random House, repudiated Jeffers' opinions and work in an unprecedented publisher's retraction printed both in The Double Axe and boldly on the book's dust wrapper. All this Jeffers took in stride for it was exterior and passing in nature. What happened in 1950--Una's death--was not exterior and from it Jeffers was never to recover.

Robinson Jeffers' idea of the beauty of God helped him bear up under the loss of his wife as it had supported him in dark days of the Second World War. There was no attempt to gloss over the gaping loss; Jeffers would never be himself again. But the poet's supreme confidence in all aspects of the natural universe--including death--kept him from despair. "Hungerfield", the narrative poem of Hungerfield and Other Poems, 1954, was first published in the May 1952 issue of Poetry Magazine. "Hungerfield" is not as long or developed as Jeffers' standard narratives. The poem is intended as a loving tribute to Jeffers' wife. The poet chose the narrative poem as the best vehicle of his tribute and his grief. As such, it is a deeply touching and successful comment on their unique personal and literary partnership.

Besides the lead narrative, Hungerfield contains one play and fourteen shorter poems, only two of which further help to clarify Jeffers' relationship with his God. "De Rerum Vertute"

is obviously indebted to Lucretius and in the poem Jeffers takes a similarly fatalistic view of the world. In everything God has left his mark:

I believe the first living cell
Had echoes of the future in it, and felt
Direction and the great animals the deep green forest
And whale's-track sea; I believe this globed earth
Not all by chance and fortune brings forth her broods,
But feels and chooses. And the Galaxy, the firewheel
On which we are pinned, the whirlwind of stars on which our
sun
is one dust-grain, one electron, this giant atom of the
universe
Is not blind force, but fulfills its life and intends its
courses. "All
things are full of God.
Winter and summer, day and night, war and peace are God."

Jeffers' fatalism is not guided by "blind force", but carries with it a deterministic blue-print of the future. Once again Robinson Jeffers rejects a world of pure chance. All phenomena of the world, including man, inherit a collective consciousness which communicates to itself the direction of its future. The process, always magnificently in tune with itself, is compellingly beautiful.

This process is the subject of "The Beauty of Things". Jeffers considers the true subject matter for poetry to be the praise of the beauties which God has instilled in everything in the universe. Great poetry, he contends, is holistic in that it stresses the relationships of things, it makes an intelligent, truthful whole of all aspects of the universe. The real reason for the existence of poetry is the unification of the world in truth.

THE BEAUTY OF THINGS

To feel and speak the astonishing beauty of things--earth,
stone
and water,
Beast, man and woman, sun, moon and stars--
The blood-shot beauty of human nature, its thoughts,
frenzies and
passions,
And unhuman nature its towering reality--
For man's half dream; man, you might say, is nature dream-
ing, but
rock
And water and sky are constant--to feel
Greatly, and understand greatly, and express greatly, the
natural
Beauty, is the sole business of poetry.
The rest's diversion: those holy or noble sentiments, the
intricate
ideas,
The love, lust, longing: reasons, but not the reason.

In his final years, Robinson Jeffers--in spite of his innate suspicion of the evil man is capable of--attempted through the use of his theological insight to unify the world of nature and of man. Previously Jeffers had written of the beauties of nature and even of man; now he understood their interrelation as purposeful effulgences of God.

Nature provided an unusually beautiful gesture on Jeffers' death in January of 1962. The entire coast, headlands to mountains, was covered in a mantle of snow that January 20th when the seventy-five year old poet died peacefully asleep in "The Bed by the Window" where, three decades earlier, he had forecast he would die. The white storm diminished with the human world scarcely aware of the poet's passing.

In the year following Jeffers' death, his biographer and friend, Melba Berry Bennett, assembled and transcribed the poems Jeffers had left behind, poems which spanned the long, lonely and comparatively unproductive years since Hungerfield of 1954. There were sufficient poems to make a thin seventy-four page volume--nearly one page for each of Jeffers' seventy-five years--The Beginning and the End and Other Poems of 1963. Aside from the minor difficulties in the transcription of Jeffers always cryptic handwriting, the book is authentically his. The views have not changed nor has most of the style. No long narratives are present; Jeffers' health and lack of will precluded sustained effort in his final years. The pall of Una's death and the poet's deep loss provide the backdrop for the work and yet these short poems of Jeffers' final years are some of his most lucid and thought-provoking works. Shortly before his death Jeffers was asked if he wished to write anything further. His response was, "No, I have said it all."

The Beginning and the End contains some of Jeffers' most deeply theological poems. In the first poem of the volume, "The Great Explosion", Robinson Jeffers provides a definition of his God:

He is no God of love, no justice of a little city like
Dante's Florence, no anthropoid God
Making commandments: this is the God who does not
care and will never cease. Look at the seas there
Flashing against this rock in the darkness--look at the
tide-stream stars--and the fall of nations--and
dawn
Wandering with wet white feet down the Carmel Valley
to meet the sea. These are real and we see their
beauty.

The great explosion is probably only a metaphor--I know
not--of faceless violence, the root of all things.

Jeffers repudiates the Gods of Moses and Dante and reaffirms
the innate violence of his God. This is the God who tortures
himself--chiefly through violence--to discover himself. These
violences are beautiful in that they are a magnificent part of
the ceaseless cyclic monistic nature of God.

Several poems in The Beginning and the End forthrightly
reject variant conceptions of God. In "The Beginning and the
End" Jeffers observes that religions of love cannot conceal
man's blood-thirsty nature; in fact, Jeffers contends that
man's viciousness helped create these very religions:

(Men are) ---Blood-snuffing rats:
But never blame them: a wound was made in the brain
When life became too hard, and has never healed.
It is there that they learned trembling religion and
blood-
sacrifice,
It is there that they learned to butcher beasts and to
slaughter men,
And hate the world: the great religions of love and kind-
ness
May conceal that, not change it. They are not primary
but reactions
Against the hate: as the eye after feeding on a red sunfall
Will see green suns.

The religions of man's past have been negligent in identifying
or in dealing with the human brain wound which eventuated when
men attained the conscious state. They have merely sought to
compensate for man's evil by projecting it on the world, using
dumb beasts as scapegoats. Robinson Jeffers advises man to see
himself for what he is (blood-snuffing rat) and then think about

the real God.

"The Great Wound" rejects and discredits one of the religions of man's past, Christianity.

And that a wandering Hebrew poet named Jesus
Is the God of the universe. Consider that!

Likewise, "Unnatural Powers" concludes with Jeffers' rejection of man's religions of love. Contemporary man's predicament is paradoxical. For "fifty thousand years" man has dreamt of doing the impossible (human flight, breathing under the seas, flights to the moon) and now that man has accomplished these things, the truth shows that the God who has aided man thus far in the Occident is a fiction. Of man:

How little he looks, how desperately scared and excited,
like a poisonous insect, and no God pities him.

"Animula" provides Robinson Jeffers' view of the doctrine of the soul's immortality. He does not deny the existence of the soul in a living man, but Jeffers finds the notion of the immortality of the soul merely another of man's pompously puffed up braggadocian fictions.

ANIMULA

The immortality of the soul--
God save us from it! To live for seventy years is a burden--
To live eternally, poor little soul--
Not the chief devil could inflict nor endure it. Fortunately
We are not committed, there is no danger.

Our consciousness passes into the world's perhaps, but
that
Being infinite can endure eternity.
--Words, theological words--eternal, infinite--we dream
too much.
But the beauty of God is high, clear and visible,

.

Man's world puffs up his mind, as a toad
Puffs himself up; the billion light-years cause a serene
and wholesome deflation.

Man will be reabsorbed like other occurrences in a world composed of matter--and hence eternal.

Not only does Robinson Jeffers reject the accepted religions of mankind, he also reiterates one of his early premonitions. "But I Am Growing Old and Indolent" records what in Jeffers' opinion were the results of interrupted and discontinued production of the vicarious victims of his narratives. The poet addresses himself and recalls his vows of the past, vows which, ruefully, Jeffers was unable to keep.

BUT I AM GROWING OLD AND INDOLENT

I have been warned. It is more than thirty years since I wrote--
Thinking of the narrative poems I made, which always
Ended in blood and pain, though beautiful enough--my
pain, my blood,
They were my creatures--I understood, and wrote to myself:
"Make sacrifices once a year to magic
Horror away from the house"--for that hangs imminent
Over all men and all houses--"This little house here
You have built over the ocean with your own hands
Beside the standing sea-boulders..." So I listened
To my Demon warning me that evil would come
If my work ceased, if I did not make sacrifice
Of storied and imagined lives, Tamar and Cawdor

And Thurso's wife--"imagined victims be our re-
deemers"--

At that time I was sure of my fates and felt
My poems guarding the house, well-made watchdogs
Ready to bite.

But time sucks out the juice,
A man grows old and indolent.

Even in his final years Robinson Jeffers retained feelings of guilt. He interpreted his inability to continue writing narratives as the cause for some of the misfortunes which befell him in his final years.

Robinson Jeffers' poetic inactivity was offset by the intensity of his adoration of the beauties of God in nature. At least seven of the poems of The Beginning and the End are concerned with the praising of the beauty of God. The poet's grandchildren who lived with him in his last years are included in two of his poems on God's beauty. Jeffers holds guarded hopes in "To Kill in War Is Not Murder" that, in spite of the corruption and vulgarity of modern man, his grandchildren may live to appreciate "the beauty of God".

As for me, I am growing old and have never
Been quite so vulgar. I look around at the present world
and think of my little grandchildren
To live in it. What? Should I cut their throats?
The beauty of men is dead, or defaced and sarcophagussed
Under vile caricatures; the enormous inhuman
Beauty of things goes on, the beauty of God, the eternal
beauty, and perhaps they'll see it.

With human dignity truncated by modern existence, the only beauty to which to turn is that of God.

In "Granddaughter" Robinson Jeffers expresses his fervent wish that his granddaughter "in her quiet times" will also have the capability to love God.

When she is eighteen
I'll not be here. I hope she will find her natural elements,
Laughter and violence; and in her quiet times
The beauty of things--the beauty of transhuman things,
Without which we are all lost. I hope she will find
Powerful protection and a man like a hawk to cover her.

The one hope for humanity is its contact with God in nature.
In "Nightpiece" Robinson Jeffers reaffirms his old confidence in nature, whatever the situation may become with man:

The elements thank God are well
enough,
It is only man must be always wakeful, steering through
hell.

"Vulture" finds Jeffers on an early morning hike. He "lay down to rest" and while motionless was inspected by a vulture wheeling overhead. Jeffers sadly reports that he

... was sorry to have disappointed him. To be eaten
by that beak and become part of him, to share those
wings and those eyes--
What a sublime end of one's body, what an enskyment;
what a life after death.

Jeffers longs to share cyclic eternity through the reuse of his body by the ordinary creatures of God. The poet's pantheism includes deep regard for even the homeliest of God's creatures. While writing "Vulture" Jeffers no doubt recalled his first publishing success, "The Condor", also a poem about a vulture-like creature written over fifty years in the distant past.

"My Loved Subject" reveals that although Robinson Jeffers has aged, he has no intention of lessening his praise of the beautiful regions of which he wrote in the past.

Old age clawed with his scaly clutch
As if I had never been such.
I cannot walk the mountains as I used to do
But my subject is what it used to be: my love, my loved
subject:
Mountain and ocean, rock, water and beasts and trees
Are the protagonists, the human people are only sym-
bolic interpreters--
So let them live or die.

Jeffers' main concern as poet was not the faithful rendition of human nature, but the truthful and heart-felt praise of the God found in nature.

"Fierce Music" recounts Jeffers' forty years' experience with the sounds of the ocean at Tor House. The poem regrets the human penchant for disregarding or not perceiving the beautiful sights and sounds of God.

FIERCE MUSIC

All night long the rush and trampling of water
And hoarse withdrawals, the endless ocean throwing his
skirmish-lines against the granite,
Come to my ears and stop there. I have heard them so
long
That I don't hear them--or have to listen before I hear
them--How long? Forty years.
But that fierce music has gone on for a thousand
Millions of years. Oh well, we get our share. But weep
that we lose so much
Because mere use won't cover up the glory.
We have our moments: but mostly we are too tired to
hear and too dull to see.

More than most men and poets Robinson Jeffers in his lifetime did hear and see these splendors of God and endeavoured in his art to record his feelings of devotion and love for such natural grandeur.

The most devout praise of the beautiful things of God in The Beginning and the End is the poem "Look, How Beautiful". The God of the poem is monistic in will and act; he creates and destroys out of no humanly identifiable motive. He is recognized by the immense beauty of "all the things that He dies."

LOOK, HOW BEAUTIFUL

There is this infinite energy, the power of God forever
working--toward what purpose?--toward none.
This is God's will; he works, he grows and changes, he
has no object.
No more than a great sculptor who has found a ledge
fine of marble, and lives beside it, and carves great
images,
And casts them down. That is God's will: to make great
things and destroy them, and make great things
And destroy them again. With war and plague and hor-
ror, and the diseases of trees and the corruptions of
stone
He destroys all that stands. But look how beautiful--
Look how beautiful are all the things that He does. His
signature
Is the beauty of things.

A true understanding of such a God does not, Jeffers implies, interpret God's acts as good or evil. The creative and destructive acts of God--unlike corresponding human activity--are worthy of our adoration. As Jeffers points out in "See the Human Figure", "To see the inhuman God is our health."

Man, if he is to become whole as a species or as an individual, must look for the God inherent in the world.

Beside the beauty of God, the second major theological theme in The Beginning and the End is Jeffers' monistic vision of that God. Four poems lay particular stress on the idea that God is (in Jeffers' old age as the poet had described him in earlier years) one source, one energy, one entity. The longest poem of the volume, "The Beginning and the End", suggests that the reason all things are full of God and beautiful is that all things are God. Each aspect of the universe is a work of God and is connected and interrelated through a type of consciousness. Nowhere does Robinson Jeffers make this clearer than in these lines from "The Beginning and the End":

I think the rocks
And the earth and the other planets, and the stars and
galaxies
Have their various consciousness, all things are conscious;
But the nerves of an animal, the nerves and brain
Bring it to focus; the nerves and brain are like a burning-
glass
To concentrate the heat and make it catch fire:
It seems to us martyrs hotter than the blazing hearth
From which it came. So we scream and laugh, clamorous
animals
Born howling to die groaning: the old stones in the door-
yard
Prefer silence: but those and all things have their own
awareness,
As the cells of a man have; they feel and feed and in-
fluence each other, each unto all,
Like the cells of a man's body making one being,
They make one being, one consciousness, one life, one
God.

In "Monument" Robinson Jeffers underscores the importance

of thinking of God as "One flowing life." The life sciences with their Linnaean binomial nomenclature and carefully constructed phylogenies of descent are really only paralleling the truth that all life is interrelated. The gaps separating creatures seen by man do not really exist in God's world. Ultimately there is no gap between the living and the non-living.

Erase the lines: I pray you not to love classifications:
The thing is like a river, from source to sea-mouth
One flowing life. We that have the honor and hardship
of being human
Are one flesh with the beasts, and the beasts with the
plants
One streaming sap, and certainly the plants and algae
and the earth they spring from
Are one flesh with the stars. The classifications
Are mostly a kind of memoria technica, use it but don't
be fooled.
It is all truly one life, red blood and tree-sap,
Animal, mineral, sidereal, one stream, one organism, one
God.
There is nothing to be despised nor hated nor feared.

Jeffers' vision of God is monistic; he allows no divisions in the nature of his God--or in the poet's adoration of him.

HE IS ALL

There is no God but God; he is all that exists,
And being alone does strangely. He is like an old Basque
shepherd,
Who was brought to California fifty years ago
And has always been alone, he talks to himself,
Solitude has got into his brain,
Beautiful and terrible things come from his mind.
God is a man of war,
Whom can he strike but himself? God is a great poet:
Whom can he praise but himself?

Because God is one, he is entirely alone; no companions to re-

late to; the supreme monistic source and fountain. God's two main attributes, violence and beauty, Jeffers translates into two corresponding human occupations: war and poetry. Having no real adversaries, God fights himself and appears violent; receiving no sufficient praise, God lauds himself and appears incomparably beautiful in all his works.

The extinction of man has no bearing on the unity of the universe nor on other life in it. The God of the universe who is the universe goes blaringly on forever, nothing diminished. For those who have "the honor and hardship of being human" and can comprehend the beauties of God's activities, the planet which sustains human life and the portion of the universe surrounding it are astoundingly beautiful--exactly as the earth was perceived to be by the first men who left the earth to travel to the comparative void of the moon.

HOW BEAUTIFUL IT IS

It flows out of mystery into mystery: there is no beginning--
How could there be? And no end--how could there be?
The stars shine in the sky like the spray of a wave
Rushing to meet no shore, and the great music
Blares on forever, but to us very soon
It will be blind. Not we nor our children nor the human
race
Are destined to live forever, the breath will fail,
The eyes will break--perhaps of our own explosive bile
Vented upon each other--or a stingy peace
Makes parents fools--but far greater witnesses
Will take our places. It is only a little planet
But how beautiful it is.

The Final Years (1941-1962): God

A Summary

Robinson Jeffers' last four volumes of poetry were deeply influenced by two sad events: the Second World War and the death of his wife, Una. Jeffers had already realized that his God could destroy as well as create; poems to this effect had already appeared in his previous volumes. But the bitter test of Jeffers' faith in a neutral God of the world came first with the beginning of the destruction of the world's greatest civilization by war and again with the death by cancer of his dearly loved wife. These two stark and adverse realities forced the poet to live in accordance with his ideas of God, a task which Jeffers accomplished in his last years.

The neutral monistic God of these final poems does not play favorites with humanity. But it is Jeffers' conviction--more than ever before--that if man is ever to fulfill his potential, he must turn away from mankind as an object of adoration to the real God of the world. The God who figures so largely in the last four volumes has the same attributes as the God of Jeffers' first mature poems. In Jeffers' posthumous The Beginning and the End and Other Poems, his God is defined with even greater clarity.

The four attributes of Jeffers' God as found in his last

poems are not new to Jeffers' verse. The poet views his God as beautiful in the signature of his power on the universe, monistic in his presence in all matter, entirely alone in his glory and in his agony, and violent in his inexplicable creative energies. Jeffers rejects for a last time the anthropoid religions of the past, assuming that some completely new culture-age of the future will build itself up on the firm knowledge of a true vision of God. In reality, it is this audience to which Jeffers addresses himself.

But when even this new age dies and finally man himself perishes, God in his violent surgings will bring into being still more perceptive creatures than man to praise "the beauty of things". As such, Robinson Jeffers' view of God is apocalyptic. The poet hopes for a reversal of man's ancient animosity to God through the truth of encountering the real God in nature. But Robinson Jeffers realizes that this will not come about in our present dying age; accordingly, he often writes for the people of God of the future.

The Final Years (1941-1962): Man

One of the factors which went into the making of Robinson Jeffers, the poet, was the First World War. Neither Western Civilization nor Robinson Jeffers recovered from the impact of that war. It was only six years after the Great War that Jeffers was able to emerge as a significant voice in American poetry. During his middle years Jeffers was partially able to shelve the implications of that conflict and hope that America would not be dragged into its second installment. In his final years Robinson Jeffers was forced to reconsider the terrible consequences of total war, and, worse still, scuttle the fragile hope he had had of America's remaining splendidly neutral, a hope which was finally dashed under the machinations of President Franklin Roosevelt.

Under these circumstances, Robinson Jeffers' already cautious view of man became increasingly guarded. For a poet who had held out a frail and tenuous hope that mankind might at last become rational in the conduct of its international affairs, the actions of the leading nations from the mid 1930's forward were to Jeffers a last straw of sorts. In Jeffers' view, mankind hopelessly discredited itself with such shoddy activity. Jeffers, who remained staunchly neutral himself, wished only to disengage himself from the certain folly of the planners of the second great conflict in his lifetime.

However, the dismayed poet still felt anguish at the impending confrontation, so much so that he could scarcely refrain from commenting on the major developments as the debacle unfolded. Aided by his neutral position, Robinson Jeffers was able to see through the smoke of battle with perspicuity to the eventual outcome and well beyond. The observations and predictions which the poet made before, during and after the war stand untarnished by time.

Besides personally feeling the burden of the war, Jeffers found that his isolationist and neutral stand was interpreted by individuals and some in government as unpatriotic and even--ludicrously--pro-German. Jeffers' neutrality left him in an unenviable position: National Socialist sympathizers realized they could not claim Robinson Jeffers as literary ally; the millions loyal to the Roosevelt regime which had fomented American involvement in the war condemned Jeffers as unAmerican; and the fellow-travellers of communism (already a sizeable crowd) were eager to make their value judgments about a man who was not avidly in favor of the total destruction of their illegitimate cousins, the nazis. As a result, Jeffers' always small but devoted audience became smaller still--a fact which led foolish and jejune people like the much-touted Kenneth Rexroth to attack Jeffers in his later years as a poet without either talent or an audience--a sad comment itself on the degeneracy of American poetry after World War II.

The poet's neutrality is crustily expressed in the poem "The Stars Go over the Lonely Ocean" from Be Angry at the Sun, the first of two volumes scarred by the war. Robinson Jeffers imagines an interview with one of the feral Russian boars which years ago escaped from a private game preserve in the Santa Lucia Mountains. The gamey old boar accurately voices Jeffers' neutralist sentiments.

THE STARS GO OVER THE LONELY OCEAN

Unhappy about some far off things
That are not my affair, wandering
Along the coast and up the lean ridges,
I saw in the evening
The stars go over the lonely ocean
And a black-maned wild boar
Plowing with his snout on Mal Paso Mountain.

The old monster snuffled, "Here are sweet roots,
Fat grubs, slick beetles and sprouted acorns.
The best nation in Europe has fallen,
And that is Finland,
But the stars go over the lonely ocean,"
The old black-bristled boar
Tearing the sod on Mal Paso Mountain.

"The world's in a bad way, my man,
And bound to be worse before it mends;
Better lie up in the mountain here
Four or five centuries,
While the stars go over the lonely ocean,"
Said the old father of wild pigs,
Plowing the fallow on Mal Paso Mountain.

"Keep clear of the dupes that talk democracy
And the dogs that talk revolution,
Drunk with talk, liars and believers.
I believe in my tusks.
Long live freedom and damn the ideologies,"
Said the gamey black-maned wild boar
Tusking the turf in Mal Paso Mountain.

Jeffers admires the smashed neutrality of Finland, the natural independence of the old boar--freedom uncollared by ideology--

while despising both the National Socialist and communist revolutionaries and the cumbrously propagandized super American dupes.

How should men live for the next "Four or five centuries"? The poem "Battle (May 28, 1940)" provides a solution:

...It would be better for men
To be few and live far apart, where none could infect
another; then slowly the sanity of field and
mountain
And the cold ocean and glittering stars might enter their
minds.
Another dream, another dream.
We shall have to accept certain limitations
In future, and abandon some humane dreams; only hard-
minded, sleepless and realist can ride this rock-
slide
To new fields down the dark mountain; and we shall have
to perceive that these insanities are normal;
We shall have to perceive that battle is a burning flower or
like a huge music, and the dive-bomber's
screaming orgasm
As beautiful as other passions; and that death and life are
not serious alternatives. One has known all these
things
For many years: there is greater and darker to know
In the next hundred.

The ideal human life suggested here is identical to the one set forth in Californians of 1916, but Robinson Jeffers realizes in 1940 that the heavy pressures of population and politics will make an isolated life impossible for centuries to come. Adjust, if you can, and keep freedom alive until the next age, is Jeffers' advice. In many of the poems of Be Angry at the Sun Jeffers forecasts that the end of civilization is yet a long way off. The final lines of "Battle":

If civilization goes down--that
Would be an event to contemplate.
It will not be in our time, alas, my dear,
It will not be in our time.

The poet's view is that from the Second World War and on, western civilization can only decline. Robinson Jeffers does not favor destruction, but he would prefer a clean and immediate collapse of civilization (knowing that such a collapse is many slow centuries away) to the creeping degradation and cruel slavery which come in the final centuries of a dying civilization.

A vista of the human future is found in section 3 of "I Shall Laugh Purely". Clearly the end time of a civilization is centuries off:

But this, I steadily assure you, is not the world's end,
Nor even the end of a civilization. It is not so late as you
think: give nature time.
These wars will end, and I shall lead a troupe of shaky old
men through Europe and America,
Old drunkards, worn-out lechers; fallen dictators, cast
kings, a disgraced president; some cashiered
generals
And collapsed millionaires: we shall enact a play, I shall
announce to the audience:
"All will be worse confounded soon."

We shall beware of wild dogs in Europe, and of the police
in armed imperial America:--
For all that pain was mainly a shift of power:-- we shall
enact our play: "Oh Christian era,
Make a good end," but first I announce to our audiences:
"This play is prophetic, it will be centuries.
This play does not represent the world's end,
But only the fall of a civilization. It is not so late as you
think: give nature time."

The poem concludes with Jeffers' conviction that the next age

will not be unduly centered around man, but on the beauty of the non-human world and its God.

...I shall laugh purely, knowing the next age
Lives on not-human beauty, waiting on circumstances and
its April, weaving its winter chrysalis;
Thin snow falls on historical rocks.

"Prescription of Painful Ends" chronicles the future degeneration of the Christian era:

...the progress of Europe and
America
Becomes a long process of deterioration--starred with
famous Byzantiums and Alexandrias,
Surely--but downward.

Eventually, only a matter of a long time, the era will end in utter collapse.

In the interim, Jeffers reconsiders the quality of human life in deteriorating times in "The Sirens". In those days, humans will still be excessively turned in on themselves, rejecting the substantial blessings of the angels of life. This personal deterioration, too, is entirely inevitable given man's present and past performances.

THE SIRENS

Perhaps we desire death: or why is poison so sweet?
Why do the little Sirens
Make kindlier music, for a man caught in the net of the
world
Between the news-cast and the work-desk--
The little chirping Sirens, alcohol, amusement, opiates,
And carefully sterilized lust--
Than the angels of life? Really it is rather strange, for the
angels

Have all the power on their side,
All the importance:--men turn away from them, pre-
ferring their own
Vulgar inventions, the little
Trivial Sirens. Here is another sign that the age needs
renewal.

"Contemplation of the Sword (April, 1938)" begins with Robinson Jeffers' listing of the mass horrors of war. In April of 1938, the Second World War seemed inevitable to Jeffers but the impending incredible suffering of millions is a deep source of agony to the poet. Men, in Jeffers' view, prefer these mass agonies to sanity and reason.

Reason will not decide at last; the sword will decide.
The sword: an obsolete instrument of bronze or steel,
formerly used to kill men, but here
In the sense of a symbol. The sword: that is: the storms
and counter-storms of general destruction;
killing of men.
Destruction of all goods and materials; massacre, more or
less intentional, of children and women;
Destruction poured down from wings, the air made
accomplice, the innocent air
Perverted into assassin and poisoner.

The sword: that is: treachery and cowardice, incredible
baseness, incredible courage, loyalties,
insanities.

The sword: weeping and despair, mass-enslavement, mass-
torture, frustration of all the hopes
That starred man's forehead. Tyranny for freedom, horror
for happiness, famine for bread, carrion for
children.

Reason will not decide at last, the sword will decide.

In only a few years these dreadful predictions could have served as descriptions of places such as Dresden and Stalingrad; little wonder Jeffers hoped his country would remain neutral and aloof from such contagion! If anything, Jeffers' pacifi-

cism was more intensely patriotic than the propaganda emanating from the national capital.

What of the great men of the human world? In order to become great, a man must have a following and a man's following ultimately corrupts him and his ideas. Isolation from men is better for a would-be great man than erstwhile fame or posthumous recognition. Humans tend to corrupt the few truly great men they have.

GREAT MEN

Consider greatness.

A great man must have a following, whether he gain it
Like Roosevelt by grandiose good intentions, cajolery
And public funds, or like Hitler by fanatic
Patriotism, frank lies, genius and terror.
Without great following no greatness; it is ever the greedy
Flame on a wick dipped in the fat of millions;
No man standing alone has ever been great;
Except, most rarely, his will, passion or intellect
Have come to posthumous power, and the naked spirit
Picked up a crown.

Yes, Alas then, poor ghost,
Nietzsche or Jesus, hermit, martyr, starved prophet,
Were you honest while you lived? You are not now.
You have found your following and it corrupts you; all
greatness

Involves betrayal, of the people by a man
Or of a man by the people. Better to have stood
Forever alone. Better been mute as a fish,
Or an old stone on the mountain, where no man comes
But only the wilderness-eyeing hawk with her catch
And feeds in peace, delicately, with little beakfuls,
While far down a long slope gleams the pale sea.

A harsh view of most of humanity is obvious in "Great Men".
The masses either support a man of base qualities or corrupt
a man of worthy talents. As Jeffers stated in "Faith", men
can be held together only by outright lies: "Man ... / Needs

lies to bind the body of his people together." Humans, as Jeffers had observed elsewhere, are "slavish in the mass."

If men must use hatred and lies to bind themselves together, there is also a compensatory and salutary exterior tension in the world which "hates humanity". The world of man, it seems, is still becoming increasingly conditioned by mass insanity.

NERVES

You have noticed the curious increasing exasperation
Of human nerves these late years? Not only in Europe,
Where reasons exist, but universal; a rope or a net
Is being hauled in, a tension screwed tighter;
Few minds now are quite sane; nearly every person
Seems to be listening for a crash, listening...
And wishing for it, with a kind of enraged
Sensibility.

Or is it what we really feel
A gathering in the air of something that hates
Humanity; and in that storm-light see
Ourselves with too much pity and the others too clearly?

Well: this is February, nineteen-three-nine
We count the months now; we shall count the days.
It seems time that we find something outside our
Own nerves to lean on.

"Shine, Empire" is the last of three prophetic poems which deal with the future of the United States. With the American entry into the war, Jeffers foresaw a divided post war world, half of which would become the onerous obligation of America to defend in order to ensure her own survival. The poem seethes with Jeffers' intensely disappointed patriotism over the fateful decision to enter into the war. The poet's estimation of his countrymen slips to an all time low. Because Americans largely

assented in the decision to become involved with the war, Jeffers in turn sees them as lower than most of "the natural run of the earth."

Powerful and armed, neutral in the midst of madness,
we might have held the whole world's balance
and stood
Like a mountain in a wind. We were misled and took sides.
We have chosen to share the crime and the
punishment.

Perhaps justly, being part of Europe. Three thousand
miles of ocean would hardly wash out the stains
Of all that mish-mash, blood, language, religion, snobbery.
Three thousand miles in a ship would not make
Americans.

I have often in weak moments thought of this people as
something higher than the natural run of the
earth.

I was quite wrong; we are lower. We are the people who
hope to win wars with money as we win elections.
Hate no one.

But hate was ground out by the government propagandists--
enough of it to stir the people into action, victory and bank-
ruptcy.

Robinson Jeffers, who had spent considerable time in
Europe before either war, also had a low opinion of the Euro-
peans. Freedom was America's special custody and it was squan-
dered to resurrect the dead soul of Europe.

All Europe was hardly worth the precarious freedom of
one of our states: what will her ashes fetch?

Jeffers feels that Americans of the future must hold up their
empire or be doomed with its collapse. The American empire,
foredestined to be weak and ill-run, is compared to previous

empires:

Now, thoroughly compromised, we aim at world rule, like
Assyria, Rome, Britain, Germany, to inherit
those hordes
Of guilt and doom. I am American, what can I say but
again, "Shine, perishing republic?" ...Shine,
empire.

This pall of doom and fate Jeffers will never be able to lift from his mind or future verse. Sadly, the human future in his land became as dreadful as the worst of his prophecies. The isolation he had recommended for men and nations was now a hopeless dream in an increasingly insane world.

But there was one glimmering hope in Jeffers' world--he believed that the old personal allegiances still worked. In "The House Dog's Grave (Haig, an English bulldog)" Jeffers celebrated the death of a favorite pet with the lines:

You were never masters, but friends. I was your friend.
I loved you well, and was loved. Deep love endures
To the end and far past the end. If this is my end,
I am not lonely. I am not afraid. I am still yours.

Beyond the immediate death of his pet, Jeffers implied that the old personal fidelities still counted for something in a human world gone irretrievably wrong.

The final poem of Be Angry at the Sun is also the title poem of the volume. In it Robinson Jeffers reaffirms his neutral position in a senselessly committed world. The wheel of fate takes those unable to sense its turning. Robinson

Jeffers remains separate still, his "cold passion for truth" more important than any allegiance to a human "pack."

BE ANGRY AT THE SUN

That public men publish falsehoods
Is nothing new. That America must accept
Like the historical republics corruption and empire
Has been known for years.

Be angry at the sun for setting
If these things anger you. Watch the wheel slope
and turn,
They are all bound on the wheel, these people
those warriors,
This republic, Europe, Asia.

Observe them gesticulating,
Observe them going down. The gang serves lies,
the passionate
Man plays his part; the cold passion for truth
Hunts in no pack.

You are not Catullus, you know,
To lampoon these crude sketches of Caesar. You
are far
From Dante's feet, but even farther still from his dirty
Political hatreds.

Let boys want pleasure, and men
Struggle for power, and women perhaps for fame,
And the servile to serve a Leader and the dupes
to be duped.
Yours is not theirs.

Against a world on fire, Robinson Jeffers retained his integrity and character. For seven years the oracle of Jeffers' neutrality would remain closed. When it reopened in 1948, the poet's view of man would be a grimly realistic as ever.

Many of the poems found in Robinson Jeffers' 1948 volume, The Double Axe, were written during the course of the Second World War. Jeffers had no reason and little opportunity to

publish the poems during the years of the conflict; the poems stirred up enough controversy as it was when published three years after the war. Jeffers persisted in his firm position of neutrality and explained his historical position in the Preface to The Double Axe:

...But I believe that history (though not popular history) will eventually take sides with me in these matters. Surely it is clear even now that the whole world would be better off if America had refrained from intervention in the European war of 1914; I think it will become equally clear that our intervention in the Second World War has been--even terribly--worse in effect. And this intervention was not forced but intentional; we were making war, in fact though not in name, long before Pearl Harbor. But it is futile at present to argue these matters. And they are not particularly important, so far as this book is concerned; they are only the background, or moral climate, of its thought and action.

R.J.

The poet's Preface was in part a mild response to his publisher's unprecedented printed retraction (which boldly appeared on the page opposite the author's Preface) of Jeffers' opinions on the war.

Robinson Jeffers' attitudes toward man in The Double Axe are reminiscent of similar opinions expressed in Be Angry at the Sun. In "Cassandra" as in "Faith" Jeffers remarks that men prefer lies to the truth:

Truly men hate the truth; they'd
liefer
Meet a tiger on the road.

In the closing lines of the poem Robinson Jeffers compares

himself to Cassandra and her sad plight:

No: you'll still mumble in a corner a crust of truth, to men
And Gods disgusting.--You and I, Cassandra.

Not only are individuals purveyors of lies; the government, with its prodigious propaganda effort to convince the people of the rectitude of the government's provocations, operates on a massive scale, in lies.

INK-SACK

The squid, frightened or angry, shoots darkness
Out of her ink-sack; the fighting destroyer throws
 out a smoke-screen;
And fighting governments produce lies.
But squid and warship do it to confuse the enemy, govern-
 ments
Mostly to stupefy their own people.
It might be better to let the roof burn and the walls crash
Than save a nation with floods of excrement.

The poem is one of Jeffers' shortest and most vitriolic directed against the Roosevelt hierarchy which was responsible for mobilizing the masses through grossly mendacious hate campaigns.

As in Be Angry at the Sun, Robinson Jeffers commends those who had the courage to remain neutral during the Second World War. With the war drawing to a close, Jeffers has praise for only a trio of the nations of Europe. "The Neutrals" provides a clear view of Jeffers' dashed hopes for the proper kind of allegiances between men and nations.

THE NEUTRALS

Now the sordid tragedy crashes to a close,
Blood, fire and bloody slime, all the dogs in the
kennel

Killing one dog: it is time to commend the neutrals.
I praise them first because they are honest enough
Not to be scared nor bought, and then I will praise them
That their luck held. I praise free Ireland, horse-breeding,
swan-haunted,
And high Switzerland, armed home of pure snows, and
Sweden,
High in the north, in the twice-hostile sea: these three
hold all
That's left of the honor of Europe.

I would praise also
Argentina, for being too proud to bay with the pack,
But her case is not clear and she faced no danger. I will
praise Finland--
In one poem with the peace-keepers unhappy Finland--
For having fought two wars, grim, clean and doomed.

In "Fourth Act (written in January, 1942)", less than
two months after Pearl Harbor, Jeffers summarizes the American
people:

Because you are simple people, kindly and ro-
mantic, and set your trust in a leader and
believed lies;
Because you are humble, and over-valued the rat-run his-
torical tombs of Europe: you have been betrayed

A second time into folly.

The naïve American, to the detriment of his own land, had false
confidence in his president and in the worn-out values of Europe.
In the same poem Jeffers likens the war to a five act play (en-
titled "The Political Animal") being staged by God in an effort
to make man see his own self-centeredness. The play is an in-
ferior one since it will never succeed in this limited objective,

but the war, after all, is only a minor event in the history of God's earth.

Not a good play, but you can see the author's intention:
to disgust and shock. The tragic theme
Is patriotism; the clowning is massacre. He wishes to turn
humanity outward from its obsession

In humanity, a revider le stelle. He will have to pile on
horrors; he will not convince you
In a thousand years: but the whole affair is only a hare-
brained episode in the life of the planet.

Jeffers' view of man is still the same, for man has not changed.
Man is as caught up as ever with that least admirable facet of
the world--himself.

"Calm and Full the Ocean" reveals Robinson Jeffers' deep-
felt compassion for

Not a few thousand but uncounted
millions, not a day but years, pain, horror, sick
hatred;
Famine that dries the children to little bones and huge
eyes; high explosive that fountains dirt, flesh and
bone-splinters.

Human hatred in war produces these ghastly results, results
which Jeffers wants no part of personally since his nation
could have aided the victims rather than add to their numbers.
The horrors are shocking and it seems that man's world for the
moment has become unstuck from the world of nature: "As if
man's world / were perfectly separate from nature's, private and
mad. / But that's not true." The abnormality of man's acts
appears monstrously great, but Jeffers avers that actually

human actions are "Too small to produce any disturbance" in the natural world.

In "What of It?" Robinson Jeffers suggests that what is wrong with man can be cured by nature.

--what of it? What is not well? Man is not well?
What of it?
He has had too many doctors, leaders and saviors: let him alone. It may be that bittle nature will cure him.

Given time and exposure to nature, man may be cured of his narcissism by his God.

Alone in a sea of angry poems "Their Beauty Has More Meaning" registers once again Robinson Jeffers' faith--not in man--but in the beauties of God in nature. Humanity will one day become extinct, but the loss to the natural world will be truly infinitesimal. The lasting qualities of the natural world far exceed the importances of the human one.

THEIR BEAUTY HAS MORE MEANING

Yesterday morning enormous the moon hung
low on the ocean,
Round and yellow-rose in the glow of dawn;
The night-herons flapping home wore dawn on their wings.
Today
Black is the ocean, black and sulphur the sky,
And white seas leap. I honestly do not know which day is
more beautiful.
I know that tomorrow or next year or in twenty years
I shall not see these things--and it does not matter, it
does not hurt;
They will be here. And when the whole human race
Has been like me rubbed out, they will still be here: storms
moon and ocean,
Dawn and the birds. And I say this: their beauty has more
meaning
Than the whole human race and the race of birds.

A similar sentiment is expressed in "The Eye" in which Jeffers contrasts the war to the Pacific Ocean: "It is half the / planet." The great eye of the greatest ocean watches things of importance, but "what it watches is not our wars."

In three of the poems of The Double Axe Robinson Jeffers correctly predicts the end and the results of the Second World War. "Eagle Valor, Chicken Mind" speaks of "the bloody / and shabby / Pathos of the result" of the war. "Teheran" lists the principals to survive the war:

The future is clear enough,

.

there will

be Russia

And America; two powers alone in the world; two bulls
in one pasture. And what is unlucky Germany
Between those foreheads?

"Teheran" concludes with the strong advice: "When man stinks, turn to God." The human gullibility so in evidence at the Teheran conference elicited this pointed remark from Jeffers.

But it is "Historical Choice (written in 1943)" which reveals the post-war era with the most astonishing clarity and accuracy. America had already made its choice to try to lead the world two years before the poem was written. The results of that choice--for America--would be sorry. In the slightly less than thirty years since the poem was written, American and world history have vindicated this remarkable poem whose subject is

human folly.

HISTORICAL CHOICE
(written in 1943)

Strong enough to be neutral--as is now proved,
 now American power
From Australia to the Aleutian fog-seas, and Hawaii to
 Africa, rides every wind--we were misguided
By fraud and fear, by our public fools and a loved leader's
 ambition,
To meddle in the fever-dreams of decaying Europe. We
 could have forced peace, even when France fell;
 we chose
To make alliance and feed war.

 Actum est. There is no returning now.
Two bloody summers from now (I suppose) we shall have
 to take up the corrupting burden and curse of
 victory.
We shall have to hold half the earth; we shall be sick with
 self-disgust,
And hated by friend and foe, and hold half the earth--
 or let it go, and go down with it. Here is a burden
We are not fit for. We are not like Romans and Britons--
 natural world-rulers,
Bullies by instinct--but we have to bear it. Who has kissed
 Fate on the mouth, and blown out the lamp--must
 lie with her.

In "We Are Those People" Jeffers forecasts what must come
to all empires, defeat.

I have abhorred the wars and despised the liars,
 laughed at the frightened
And forecast victory; never one moment's doubt.

.

 ... it becomes clear that we too may
 suffer
What others have, the brutal horror of defeat--

To see the future for America Robinson Jeffers advises Ameri-
cans to watch the now-defeated Germans: "therefore watch Ger-

many / And read the future." The future of a defeated nation will be ignominious indeed. Like the Germans after World War Two, Americans of the future will have to play the ragged part of the vanquished:

Our men will curse, cringe, obey;
Our women uncover themselves to the grinning victors for
bits of chocolate.

In "Diagram" Jeffers presents another picture of the human future. There are, he observes, two curves in the historical air: that of "the Christian culture-complex" and the aeronautical curve of the future "that began at / Kittyhawk." When the two curves cross in the sky Jeffers predicts dire things for the human future:

But watch when the two curves cross: you children
Not far away down the hawk's-nightmare future: you will
see monsters.

Another theme which touches on humanity in The Double Axe is Jeffers' contention that man is the only unworthy creature to inhabit the earth. "Orca" contains the most pellucid statement of this position.

The earth is a star, its human element
Is what darkens it. War is evil, the peace will be evil,
cruelty is evil; death is not evil. But the breed of
man
Has been queer from the start. It looks like a botched
experiment that has run wild and ought to be
stopped.

"The King of Beasts" updates Jeffers' view of human cruelty and

registers commensurate human unhappiness.

THE KING OF BEASTS

Cattle in the slaughter-pens, laboratory dogs
Slowly tortured to death, flogged horses, trapped
fur-bearers,
Agonies in the snow, splintering your needle teeth on chill
steel--look:
Mankind, your Satans, are not very happy either. I wish
you had seen the battle-squalor, the bombings,
The screaming fire-deaths. I wish you could watch the
endless hunger, the cold, the moaning, the hope-
lessness.
I wish you could smell the Russian and German torture-
camps. It is quite natural the two-footed beast
That inflicts terror, the cage, enslavement, torment, and
death on all other animals
Should eat the dough that he mixes and drink the death-
cup. It is just and decent. And it will increase, I
think.

With the horrors of the war, human savagery has been turned in
on man.

"Original Sin" recalls man's barbarous past, a past which
Jeffers feels is worth recalling from time to time, if only to
place the present in perspective. Jeffers pictures human prede-
cessors gleefully dancing about a pit in which they are slowly
roasting a mammoth to death. The poet concludes with a character-
istic disavowal of the human species:

These are the people.
This is the human dawn. As for me, I would rather
Be a worm in a wild apple than a son of man.
But we are what we are, and we might remember
Not to hate any person, for all are vicious;
And not be astonished at any evil, all are deserved;
And not fear death; it is the only way to be cleansed.

For man, the only solution to his blood-thirsty and cruel nature is the final escape of death. The only way to be washed clean of the original sin of being a man is to die.

The final poem of The Double Axe, "The Inquisitors", is an eerie account of the judgment of man by an imaginary race of giant hills who frequent the Santa Lucia Mountains south of Carmel. They examine representative samples of the human species on a "table-topped rock". The hills discuss the apparent harmlessness yet obvious noxiousness of the creatures. The hill giants even peel one human to examine the brain, the supposed source of the contagion of the earth. The hills ponder the human possession of the new secret of nuclear energy and consider exterminating the species of man but decide that man is ultimately not as dangerous as assumed:

"It is not likely they can destroy all life: the planet is
capacious. Life would surely grow up again
From grubs in the soil, or the newt and toad level, and be
beautiful again. And again perhaps break its legs
On its own cleverness: who can forecast the future?

Humanity--with its apparently monumentally consequential difficulties--is inconsequential compared to the earth's energetic thrust for life or even its geological features.

Robinson Jeffers left man the best counsel he could in "Advice to Pilgrims". According to Jeffers, humans are guided by unreliable pilots, their minds. The senses are slightly more reliable, but intuition is the most trustworthy guide--if it has

been properly exposed to the beautiful natural qualities of the world. The poet's advice is succinct. Mankind can have its minor beauty only in the solitude of isolation, insulated, not from nature, but from other men.

ADVICE TO PILGRIMS

That our senses lie and our minds trick us is true,
but in general
They are honest rustics; trust them a little;
The senses more than the mind, and your own mind more
than another man's.
As to the mind's pilot, intuition--
Catch him clean and stark naked, he is first of truth-
tellers; dream-clothed, or dirty
With fears and wishes, he is prince of liars.
The first fear is of death: trust no immortalist. The first
desire
Is to be loved: trust no mother's son.
Finally I say let demagogues and world-redeemers babble
their emptiness
To empty ears; twice duped is too much.
Walk on gaunt shores and avoid the people; rock and
wave are good prophets;
Wise are the wings of the gull, pleasant her song.

The redeeming world of nature is the heal-all for human pilgrims who wish to remain in contact with the goal of their pilgrimage, peaceful reunion through death with God.

The Double Axe was written by a poet who felt and saw clearly the unpleasant realities of human behavior during one of the most terrible times in human history. The poems are not in the least complimentary to man. Robinson Jeffers' deep dejection at seeing some of the most cherished and precious of human achievements--entities such as freedom, human dignity and integrity, honesty, personal decency and kindness--defaced and degraded is mere-

ly reflected in the short poems of The Double Axe. The war ground down to its heavy conclusion, and the heavy peace came as Jeffers had predicted it would.

At a time when the rest of the world was busy trying to get back on its feet, Robinson Jeffers had his swept out from under him with the certain news that Una's cancer (which had been successfully treated in 1941) was now diagnosed as terminal. The lamentable loss of his wife would stifle significant publication by the poet (with the exception of Hungerfield of 1954) for the rest of Jeffers' life.

Five of the thirteen short poems of Hungerfield deal directly with Jeffers' view of man. Here Jeffers reinforces his ideas of the nature and definition of man, the limited beauty of humanity, and the best way for a man to live. The longest of the short poems of Hungerfield is "De Rerum Virtute" which among other topics considers the limited beauty of man. Jeffers, fully convinced that man is part of God in nature, writes of the beauty of the human species--when in its proper setting. It is difficult to see through to the real beauty that is man's, suggests Jeffers, since the quality and quantity of beauty present in all of humanity is minute compared to the greater beauties of God and of nature.

... Indeed it is
hard to see beauty
In any of the acts of man: but that means the acts of a
sick microbe

On a satellite of a dust-grain twirled in a whirlwind
In the world of stars
Something perhaps may come of him; in any event
He can't last long.--Well: I am short of patience
Since my wife died ... and this era of spite and hate-
filled

half-worlds
Gets to the bone. I believe that man too is beautiful,
But it is hard to see, and wrapped up in falsehoods.
Michangelo

and the Greek sculptors--
How they flattered the race! Homer and Shakespeare--
How they flattered the race!

V

One light is left us: the beauty of things, not men;
The immense beauty of the world, not the human world.
Look--and without imagination, desire nor dream--directly
At the mountains and the sea. Are they not beautiful?

.....

The beauty of things means virtue and value in them.
It is in the beholder's eye, not the world? Certainly.
It is the human mind's translation of the transhuman
Intrinsic glory. It means that the world is sound,
Whatever the sick microbe does. But he too is part of it.

Robinson Jeffers describes the real but limited significance of
man. The vision of man here presented is at once soberingly
limiting and maturingly realistic.

The human population explosion, which for Carmel had be-
gun in the early 1920's and in Jeffers' day was still nowhere
near its crest, is what prompted Robinson Jeffers in "Carmel
Point" to express pity for the beautiful places of the earth be-
fouled with human habitation. However, man will soon vanish
from the face of the earth (in geological terms) and Carmel
Point will beautifully regain its patient, pristine loveliness.

CARMEL POINT

The extraordinary patience of things!
This beautiful place defaced with a crop of suburban houses--
How beautiful when we first beheld it,
Unbroken field of poppy and lupin walled with clean cliffs;
No intrusion but two or three horses pasturing,
Or a few milch cows rubbing their flanks on the outcrop
rock-
heads--

Now the spoiler has come: does it care?
Not faintly. It has all time. It knows the people are a
tide

That swells and in time will ebb, and all
Their works dissolve. Meanwhile the image of the pristine
beauty

Lives in the very grain of the granite,
Safe as the endless ocean that climbs our cliff.--As for us:
We must uncenter our minds from ourselves;
We must unhumanize our views a little, and become confident
As the rock and ocean that we were made from.

The theme is the insignificance of man--and the remote possibility
of man becoming tranquil at last under the sure influence of na-
ture.

Man sprang from nature and is part of nature still. Jef-
fers' definition of man ("man, you might say, is nature dreaming")
from his brief poem "The Beauty of Things" emphasizes the special
abilities and mission of man. Nature, Jeffers wrote elsewhere,
seems asleep. It is man's destiny to "break the somnambulism of
nature" with his consciousness--not an important task as things
go, but nevertheless a unique one. If only, Jeffers hopes, one
day man would be able to transcend the scars of the wound caused
by his emerging from that sleep and duly act out his destined
role in the natural world. At present, regretably, man is mere-
ly a "spoiler".

Most of humanity is dangerously unstable as Robinson Jeffers indicates in "The Old Stonemason", a poem with plain autobiographical reference. Jeffers' communion is not with fickle men, but with the conservative and unchanging people of his avocation and inspiration, the people of "Hard heads and stiff wits", the faithful, rocky people of Jeffers' stonemasonry. The poet's position is intentionally distant and remote from the "popular drift" of humanity.

THE OLD STONEMASON

Stones that rolled in the sea for a thousand years
Have climbed the cliff and stand stiff-ranked in the
house-walls.
Hurricane may spit his lungs out they'll not be moved.
They have become conservative; they remember the endless
Treacheries of ever-sliding water and slimy ambushes
Along the shore; they'll never again give themselves
To the tides and the dreams, the popular drift,
The whirlpool progress, but stand steady on their hill--
At bay?--Yes, but unbroken.
I have much in common with these old rockheads.
Old comrades, I too have escaped and stand.
I have shared in my time the human illusions, the muddy
foolish-
ness
And craving passions, but something thirty years ago pulled
me
Out of the tide-wash; I must not even pretend
To be one of the people. I must stand here
Alone with open eyes in the clear air growing old,
Watching with interest and only a little nausea
The cheating shepherds, this time of the demagogues and the
docile people, the shifts of power,
And pitiless general wars that prepare the fall;
But also the enormous unhuman beauty of things; rock, sea
and
stars, fool-proof and permanent,
The birds like yachts in the air, or beating like hearts
Along the water; the flares of sunset, the peaks of Point
Lobos;
And hear at night the huge waves, my drunken quarrymen
Climbing the cliff, hewing out more stones for me
To make my house. The old granite stones, those are my
people;

Hard heads and stiff wits but faithful, not fools, not
chatterers;
And the place where they stand today they will stand also
tomorrow.

Humanity being what it was, Robinson Jeffers looked elsewhere
for honest companionship. In his final years Jeffers did not re-
linquish his scornful view of the masses of humanity.

Nor did Jeffers abandon his personal position of neutral-
ity in human factions and wars. In "Time of Disturbance" the old
stonemason recorded his code of non-alignment with men. Inured
feelings of good and evil, of love and revenge, are out of place
in the neutral world of Robinson Jeffers. The poet advises man
to preserve at all costs a separate, uncontaminated neutral stance
in causes, crises, organizations, and human quarrels.

TIME OF DISTURBANCE

The best is, in war or faction or ordinary vindictive
life, not to take
sides.

Leave it for children, and the emotional rabble of the
streets, to
back their horse or support a brawler.

But if you are forced into it: remember that good and evil
are as

common as air, and like air shared
By the panting belligerents; the moral indignation that
hoarsens
orators is mostly a fool.

Hold your nose and compromise; keep a cold mind. Fight,
if needs

must; hate no one. Do as God does,
Or the tragic poets: They crush their man without hating
him,
their Lear or Hitler, and often save without love.

As for these quarrels, they are like the moon, recurrent
and fan-

tastic. They have their beauty but night's is
better.
It is better to be silent than to make a noise. It is
better to strike dead
than to strike often. It is better not to strike.

Robinson Jeffers' personal code as outlined in "Time of Disturbance" is an adaptation of older codes of human behavior. The poet tempered the harshness of more ancient codes with his own neutrality and pacifism. Robinson Jeffers felt that human violence and war were a natural quality of man. If a man must kill, he should do so dispassionately--not hardened for the occasion by hatred--but Jeffers thought it better by far, through intelligent foresight, to avoid altogether situations of a violent nature.

The poems of Hungerfield reveal a solitary, uncommitted, aging man in anguish at the loss of his wife. Jeffers' comment on man in Hungerfield is ideologically similar to that of previous volumes, with the tone, perhaps, somewhat less bitter and biting. Jeffers' advice on the conduct of human life was addressed to the narrowing band of those capable of listening. Age, sorrow, grief and loss have tempered the man, but the crisp clarity of diction and the same old allegiance to truth are still present in full vigor in the all too few poems of the last volume to appear in Jeffers' lifetime. After 1954 and Hungerfield, the aging widower had another eight years to live. The sparse poetic fruit of those years is mute tribute to his departed Una.

Eight years is a long time. Although Robinson Jeffers' posthumous The Beginning and the End is his shortest book of mature poems, a great deal of thought went into the forty-eight poems collected in the little volume. Jeffers devotes considerable focus in these poems to man. As the volume's title suggests, Jeffers' observations on man range from the hypothetical origin of man to the final extinction of the species.

In the title poem, "The Beginning and the End", Robinson Jeffers hypothesizes on the origin of man. Man, originally a northern forest ape, was forced to take up the bipedal state when the great northern forests were decimated through climatological change. Early man lived in constant fear of other more sizeable and ferocious creatures. Man had to invent alertness in the form of consciousness, fire, weapons in an effort to survive. But in so doing, man also made

a wound ... in the brain
When life became too hard, and (it) has never healed.

Jeffers expresses the hope that slowly one day man may become accustomed to his own nature and live accordingly.

That ancient wound in the brain
Has never healed, it hangs wide, it lets in the stars
Into the animal-stinking ghost-ridden darkness, the human soul.
The mind of man
Slowly, perhaps, man may grow into it--
Do you think so? This villanous king of beasts, this deformed ape?--He has mind
And imagination, he might go far
And end in honor. The hawks are more heroic but man
has a steeper mind,

Huge pits of darkness, high peaks of light,
You may calculate a comet's orbit or the dive of a hawk,
not a man's mind.

In Jeffers' final opinion, the future of man is open either to honor or shame. Given the long view of things, "The Beginning and the End" is a reasonably optimistic assessment of man's future. Man's steep mind cannot be predicted, channeled, or calculated by man. Perhaps, thinks Jeffers, there are fine things yet in store for man. There is, however, no real cause for glorying in man's past; in the words of the poem, men have been and still are "Blood-snuffing rats".

What function does man serve in God's ordering of things?

The human race is one of God's
sense-organs,
Immoderately alerted to feel good and evil
And pain and pleasure. It is a nerve-ending,
Like eye, ear, taste-buds (hardly able to endure
The nauseous draught) it is a sensory organ of God's
As Titan-mooded Lear or Prometheus reveal to their
audience
Extremes of pain and passion they will never find
In their own lives but through the poems as sense-organs
of beasts and men
Are sense-organs of God

Man's mission is to experience for God some of the heights and depths God has created but not experienced himself. Human agony, passion and pain are observed by God and have a cathartic effect upon him in the same manner that heroic theatrical tragedy affects a human audience.

Man is not the only sense-organ of God, but "one of God's

sense-organs". Man's mission is important but by no means unique. Humans are excessively alert to notions of good and evil--not because these notions are real (any more than Lear's grief would be possible or endurable), but because good and evil are conceptions which God wishes to sound out through the vicarious experiences of man. Jeffers writes that there are other active centers of intense and focused perception in the universe:

...and on other globes
Throughout the universe much greater nerve-endings
Enrich the consciousness of the one being
Who is all that exists.

In comparison to these "greater nerve-endings", man is of little consequence. "The Beginning and the End" provides Jeffers' final assessment of man's ordained mission:

This is man's mission:
To find and feel; all animal experience
Is a part of God's life. He would be balanced and neutral
As a rock on the shore, but the red sunset-waves
Of life's passions fling over him. He endures them,
We endure ours.

The exotic possibilities of animal existence and perception are "part of God's life", a part which man is to endure and experience as a creature of God. God has created man for the purposes of finding and feeling the universe about him, purposes which men are entirely able to fulfill.

Robinson Jeffers takes a sobering look backward into the human past in "Believe History" and finds little about which to

be cheery. Incredibly diabolical activities reveal a human past men are apt to neglect. These horrors have brought man through time to the "weeping horrors of old age."

BELIEVE HISTORY

I think we are the ape's children, but believe history
We are the Devil's: the fire-deaths, the flaying alive,
The blinding with hot iron, the crucifixions, the castra-
tions, the famous
Murder of a King of England by hot iron forced
Through the anus to burn the bowels, and men outside
the ten-foot dungeon-wall
Could hear him howling. Through such violence, such
horrors
We have come and survived time.
"It came from the Devil and will go to the Devil,"
The old Norman said.

But those were the violences
Of youth. We are not returned to that point.
These are the grim and weeping horrors of old age.

Man's violent present is hardly an improvement on his ghastly past.

The malicious and foolish unpredictability of man is the subject of "To the Story-Tellers". Man does not seem to act in his own best interest; anything ridiculous, illogical, bizarre or grotesque is possible with man. The storytellers may write what they will of man; men will bring it to pass.

TO THE STORY-TELLERS

Man, the illogical animal. The others go wrong by anach-
ronistic
Instinct, for the world changes, or mistaken
Observation, but man, his loose moods disjoin; madness
is under the skin
To the deep bone. He will be covetous
Beyond use or cause, and then suddenly spendthrift flings
all possessions

To all the spoilers. He will suffer in patience
Until his enemy has him by the throat helpless, and go
 mad with rage
When it least serves. Or he'll murder his love
And feast his foe. Oh--an amazing animal, be education
And instinct: he often destroys himself
For no reason at all, and desperately crawls for life when
 it stinks.
And only man will deny known truth.
You story-tellers, novelist, poet and playwright, have a
 free field,
There are no fences, man will do anything.

The human propensity for mischief and evil is worsened by man's
perverse denial of "known truth." Robinson Jeffers' disappoint-
ment--even anger--at man's excesses is at the heart of his un-
compromising view of man. Human beings still have not learned
or applied the sane and sage advice of the ancient Greeks: Know
the middle way.

More grim in aspect are the final lines of "Prophets"
which intone that the worst of men win wars. Unless a race,
group or nation painfully keeps alive the old passions, it is
doomed to extinction through warfare with more elemental races,
groups and nations. Civilization sublimates, ameliorates, dulls
the primal instincts which win wars. The loss of such instincts
through civilizing influences only invites wars.

We know that as civilization
Advances, so wars increase.

The prophets forecast the speedy decline of the most civilized of
races.

You can dance on men's minds, but the deep instincts,
Fear, envy, loyalty, pride of kind and the killer's passion,
are past your power. They are terribly in earnest,
And the other mere speculation. No wonder they are
earnest: for ages
Beyond reckoning those who retain them have killed or
enslaved those who renounce them. It's a bitter say-
ing that war
Will be won by the worst, what else can I say?--Laugh
at that, Puck.

Robinson Jeffers does not approve of these vestiges of man's
primitive state, but he is honest enough to admit that they are
a factor in the survival of men.

Human life, whatever its circumstances, is thorny and
difficult. In his final years Jeffers heard the word "nettle-
bed" mentioned in conversation by an old friend. That word
appeared in the final lines of his poem "Patronymic" as an apt
description of Jeffers' entire life.

... I have twisted and turned on a bed
of nettles
All my life long: an apt name for life: nettlebed.
Deep under it swim the dead, down the dark tides and
bloodshot eras of time, bathed in God's peace.

"Nettlebed" was an even more apt description of Jeffers' last
years without his Una who is referred to indirectly in the final
lines quoted above.

One of Jeffers' foremost concerns in his last poems was
to make certain that his verse placed man in proper perspective.
Such a task Jeffers could not accomplish in a polished genteel
manner; only the most direct of methods would counterbalance

and rectify man's pompous self-image. "On an Anthology of Chinese Poems" expresses regard for the Chinese painters who at least were honest in their depiction of man as a minor feature in the spectacular natural landscape.

Beautiful the fantastically
Small farmhouse and ribbon of rice-fields a mile below;
and billows of mist
Blow through the gorge. These men were better
Artists than any of ours, and far better observers. They
loved landscape
And put man in his place.

"Star-Swirls" is even more direct still in its attempt to place man in perspective.

What a pleasure it is to mix one's mind with geological
Time, or with astronomical relax it.
There is nothing like astronomy to pull the stuff out of
man.
His stupid dreams and red-rooster importance: let him
count the star-swirls.

To Jeffers, any contemporary view of man which ignores the sobering discoveries of astronomy and geology is false.

Another sobering reality for present-day man is the "torrent(s) of new-born babies"--the population explosion. Man's erstwhile domination of the planet had allowed him to over-populate the planet which sustains him. "Passenger Pigeons" is a poem which compares the great tides of life in nature to those of man. Another poem, "Birth and Death", laments the passing of individuality and human dignity in an over-populated world.

BIRTH AND DEATH

I am old and in the ordinary course of nature shall die soon, but the human race is not old
But rather childish, it is an infant and acts like one.
And now it has captured the keys of the kingdom of un-
earthly violence. Will it use them? It loves destruc-
tion you know.
And the earth is too small to feed us, we must have room.
It seems expedient that not as of old one man, but many
nations and races die for the people.
Have you noticed meanwhile the population explosion
Of man on earth, the torrents of new-born babies, the
bursting schools? Astonishing. It saps man's dignity.
We used to be individuals, not populations.
Perhaps we are now preparing for the great slaughter.
No reason to be alarmed; stone-dead is dead;
Breeding like rabbits we hasten to meet the day.

"Ghost" relates an encounter of Robinson Jeffers' ghost with a future occupant of Tor House. The ghost, "moping about this place in mad moonlight", is amazed as ever at humanity's fool-hearty self-fixations:

... "Who are you? What are you doing here?" "Nothing to hurt you," it answers, "I am just looking
At the walls that I built. I see that you have played hell
With the trees that I planted." "There has to be room
for people," he answers. "My God," he says, "That
still!"

Ironically, most of the hundreds of trees Jeffers planted at Tor House are already cut down.

Robinson Jeffers does not feel that the human race is anywhere near becoming noble. Humanity encroached on many of the things Jeffers held dear: eagles, pumas, privacy; all were eroded by human presence--"half the glory is gone." Worse still, the

masses of humanity interfered with the poet's love and affection for nature. Humanity compared to "a handful of wildflowers" comes off a distinct second best.

I am old, and my wife has died,
Whose eyes made life. As for me, I have to consider and
take thought
Before I can feel the beautiful secret
In places and stars and stones. To her it came freely.
I wish that all human creatures might feel it.
That would make joy in the world, and make men per-
haps a little nobler--as a handful of wildflowers,
Is nobler than the human race.

Jeffers repeats his wish that all humanity might experience God's beauty, the beauty humanity desperately requires to become whole.

Nor has Robinson Jeffers neglected another old theme in The Beginning and the End: consideration of the best life for men on earth. "The Silent Shepherds" is a lengthy poem to quote in its entirety, but it remains the best single expression of Jeffers recommendations for a spiritually healthy means of livelihood. "The Silent Shepherds" records Jeffers' views on a great variety of human and societal fronts--all the way, in fact, from law to living, and from philosophy to death. The most ancient of human occupations are also the most highly recommended.

THE SILENT SHEPHERDS

What's the best life for a man?
--Never to have been born, sings the choros, and the
next best
Is to die young. I saw the Sybil at Cumae
Hung in her cage over the public street--
What do you want, Sybil? I want to die.

Apothanein Thelo. Apothanein Thello. Apothanein
Thelo ...

You have got your wish. But I mean life, not death.
What's the best life for a man? To ride in the wind. To
ride horses and herd cattle
In solitary places above the ocean on the beautiful moun-
tain, and come home hungry in the evening
And eat and sleep. He will live in the wild wind and
quick rain, he will not ruin his eyes with reading,
Nor think too much.

However, we must have philosophers.
I will have shepherds for my philosophers,
Tall dreary men lying on the hills all night
Watching the stars, let their dogs watch the sheep. And
I'll have lunatics
For my poets, strolling from farm to farm, wild liars dis-
torting
The county news into supernaturalism--
For all men to such are devils or gods--and that
increases
Man's dignity, man's importance, necessary lies
Best told by fools.

I will have no lawyers nor constables
Each man guard his own goods: there will be man-
slaughter,
But no more wars, no more mass-sacrifice. Nor I'll have
no doctors,
Except old women gathering herbs on the mountain,
Let each have her sack of opium to ease the death-pains.

That would be a good world, free and out-doors.
But the vast hungry spirit of the time
Cries to his chosen that there is nothing good
Except discovery, experiment and experience and dis-
covery: To look truth in the eyes,
To strip truth naked, let our dogs do our living for us
But man discover.

It is a fine ambition,
But the wrong tools. Science and mathematics
Run parallel to reality, they symbolize it, they squint at it,
They never touch it: consider what an explosion
Would rock the bones of men into little white fragments
and unsky the world
If any man should for a moment touch truth.

Robinson Jeffers' version of utopia, he realizes, is not possible
in his own age. He finds it incongruous, though, that an age
bent on discovering truth has not the remotest hope of actually
doing so--while our real lives are led for us by our canines.

If Jeffers recommends the life of a herdsman, he does not--in two of the poems of The Beginning and the End--recommend the life of a poet to anyone. "Eager to Be Praised" contains Jeffers' thoughts on the office of poet and the manner of life a poet must lead in order to become a great poet. From Vergil to Robert Burns, Robinson Jeffers finds a great poet's life is one of sorrows. He cannot understand the young men who flock to him wishing to pursue this decidedly unhealthy occupation.

Yet the young men
Still come to me with their books and manuscripts,
Eager to be poets, eager to be praised, eager as Keats.
They are mad I think.

In Jeffers' estimation, a poet cannot write truthfully or accurately unless and until he has sacrificed himself to his art, a high price to pay for a hearing he might not receive.

TEAR LIFE TO PIECES

Eagle and hawk with their great claws and hooked heads
Tear life to pieces; vulture and raven wait for death to
soften it.

The poet cannot feed on this time of the world
Until he has torn it to pieces, and himself also.

But the two most prominent themes on humanity of The Beginning and the End are the relationship of man to nature and the extinction of the human species. Jeffers himself is close to death and these two end-time themes are the most explored of any relating to man in his final poems. In "Salvage" Jeffers expresses the wish that all men might be exposed to nature's beauties since

(as he notes in "Full Moon") men are--like it or not--still profoundly influenced by nature.

You would be amazed what the
moon does to us.
Our women come in heat once a month
Following the moon, remembering their outlaw joys in
the forest;
Our maniacs lift up their heads and howl
And beat their cell-doors, they cannot sleep at full moon,
they are moon-struck.
Nor can the astronomer see his moon-dazzled
Constellations: let him give one night in the month to
earth and the moon,
Women and games.

Modern technologically-oriented man is out of touch with nature; little wonder man himself and his institutions are disjointed and deeply perturbed. "To Kill in War Is Not Murder" presents some of the "Obedient, intelligent, trained technicians like trained seals" who "know nothing" but are still responsible for the defacing of human dignity and integrity. Jeffers concludes:

The beauty of men is dead, or defaced and sarcophagussed
Under vile caricatures; the enormous inhuman
Beauty of things goes on, the beauty of God, the eternal
beauty

The God-like beauty of the world will outlive man. It is man's felicity to perceive the beauty while alive; it is also man's destiny to perish. From "How Beautiful It Is":

Not we nor our children nor the human
race
Are destined to live forever

From "The Beautiful Captive":

The
troublesome race of man, Oh beautiful planet, is
not immortal.

And the manner of the passing of the human race will be neither poetic nor noble as Robinson Jeffers intimates in

END OF THE WORLD

When I was young in school in Switzerland, about the
time of the Boer War,
We used to take it for known that the human race
Would last the earth out, not dying till the planet died.
I wrote a schoolboy poem
About the last man walking in stoic dignity along the
dead shore
Of the last sea, alone, alone, alone, remembering all
His racial past. But now I don't think so. They'll die
faceless in flocks,
And the earth flourish long after mankind is out.

"Passenger Pigeons" concludes with Death turning his "great rolling eyes" to humanity and mockingly agreeing that man will certainly live forever.

"Oh," he said, "surely
You'll live forever"--grinning like a skull, covering his
mouth with his hand--"What could exterminate
you?"

To Robinson Jeffers, the end of man is as certain as his own imminent demise.

The Final Years (1941-1962): Man

A Summary

In his final four volumes of poetry Robinson Jeffers takes a dim view of man. The Second World War was already well under way when Be Angry at the Sun was published in 1941. Jeffers, who had previously noted that "men have tough hearts", was confident from the start that America would emerge victorious from the carnage. He was deeply saddened, however, at this prospect since he foresaw the long-term detriments such a victory would bring to a free society. Jeffers' personal pacifism and ideological nonalignment dictated that he strongly advocate in his verse a neutral attitude toward the war. It seemed irrational to him that America should, for the second sorry time, leap into the wars of Europe, but leap she did and Jeffers grieved for the historical error of the decision.

What little confidence Robinson Jeffers had in mankind evaporated with the United States' decision to enter the Second World War. Jeffers, who voted Republican most of his adult life, disliked presenting any of his political views in poetry, but the well-plotted entry of the United States into the war was more than his neutrality would tolerate. Several of the poems of Be Angry at the Sun and The Double Axe are openly critical of the Roosevelt administration's activities and decisions.

The poems of Jeffers' last years are full of the poet's chief criticism of man, to wit: man is inordinately taken up with self-love. Jeffers remained adamant that as long as humanity continues to be self-centered, man will never be able to fulfill his real and final destiny here on earth. Many of the poems also reflect Jeffers' conviction that since our present Christian age is slowly suffering from spiritual attrition and accordingly headed downhill, it will only be in a succeeding age that man will find the strength and insight to found a culture based on a more veracious doctrine of man and man's place under the stars. Often Jeffers looks, as it were, over the heads of the present and even over those of the distant future to address the inhabitants of that newer, brighter, more objective age.

Robinson Jeffers' final poems are often prophetic. The prophecies are many and varied. For the immediate future Jeffers foresees the collapse of individual freedom as understood by western man and as typified by the American experience of that ideal. Under these historically inevitable circumstances, Jeffers' advice is to turn outward from man to God: "When man stinks, turn to God." Much of the unbridled enthusiasm for man's future was found in Californians or even in Roan Stallion, Tamar has vanished in Jeffers' later years. The view of man in Jeffers' final poems is not pessimistic, but seeks, in place of human immaturity and solipsism, to provide man with the irrefutable facts about himself and his origin in order to see himself objectively

and at last act intelligently and rationally. To accomplish these ends, Robinson Jeffers--in the best of prophetic tradition--saw fit to focus on the sordid, cruel, filthy, undesirable aspects of human existence which were often glossed over by other poets.

Clearly Jeffers felt that the complete story of man's past had either not been told or was intentionally neglected. Jeffers felt there was ultimately more good in presenting a truthful view of humanity than in preserving only the most auspicious of human acts for man's consideration.

Modern science (geology and astronomy in particular) reinforced Jeffers' emphasis on the relative insignificance of man, his planet, and the solar system in the boundless universe of God. These facts available, man had yet to assimilate their true meaning into a corresponding view of himself and his institutions. Robinson Jeffers in his last poems expressed only guarded hopes that one distant day man might be able to live in peace with himself and in consonance with his true place in the universe.

Many of the poems of Hungerfield and The Beginning and the End contemplate the extinction of the human species. Jeffers, himself near death, wrote with ardor of the eventual end of the human race. The poet's neutral stance toward all of God's creation allowed him objectively to see the end of man as a scarcely noteworthy event in the life of the planet. Content with the

splendors of the natural world about him and confident that these wonders were greater than man and long would outlast him, Robinson Jeffers was able to commend man to his terminal fate with stoic resignation.

Man was never the primary topic in Robinson Jeffers' poetry. Man is present, it is true, in agony, and a little in glory, but the poet was ever mindful of his true mission: to point the way from--and for--man to God. The poems of Jeffers' final years amplify his ideas on man, ideas which have antecedents in all of his preceding volumes of mature verse. The tone may on occasion be bitter, but the vision is clear and consistent. No idealistic bunk is present. Jeffers has painstakingly seen to it that the petty balloons of human idealism have all been pricked in his verse. What human conceit he has had to cauterize is nothing to the vision Robinson Jeffers unveiled--the race of man potentially content with its nature and with God's.

Conclusion

One of the qualities of a great poet is great thought. To merit such an appellation, a poet must think and think deeply on the eternally significant and vital issues of the universe. Two of the greatest questions any man can ask and attempt to answer in his lifetime were consistently handled by Robinson Jeffers in his poetry: "Who is God?" and "What is man?"

This thesis has attempted through extensive reference to Jeffers' innermost thoughts as faithfully recorded in his short poems to plot the record of the poet's wrestling with "these questions; old coins / Rubbed faceless, dateless." Robinson Jeffers' considerations of the primordial human yearning for God and the conjectural provenance of man rank him in the rare company of the great poets.

The God of Robinson Jeffers' poems does not alter over the years. The painful experiences of Jeffers' time on earth forced the poet to praise and present his God with consistent clarity and eloquence. One could with accuracy appraise Jeffers' achievement as a persistent effort to praise and present his God in poetry. The vision of God in Jeffers' early mature works is the same as that of his final poems. Chronology meant little to Jeffers when it came to the timeless attributes of his God. Over the years Robinson Jeffers wrote little which revealed a basic new concept of God ("God is one"), but he did much to emphasize

and elucidate the nature and divine attributes of God.

With man, the case is somewhat different. Jeffers' view of man did change--slightly. The early Jeffers, imbued with the fresh revelation of his God, moved from a position of eagerly anticipating that some of mankind might finally embrace a rational and natural deity to the stark realization that at present men are not interested in anything outside their own immediate needs and cravings. Accordingly, the poet's view of man, never warm or encomiastic, became colder still and more searchingly realistic. The appalling spectacle of the Second World War only served to vindicate Jeffers' harsh view of man, a view which he held staunchly to his death.

On the other hand, Jeffers' vision for man, based as it was on the poet's love of his God, did not alter over the decades. Robinson Jeffers felt from the outset that man, while he had not yet begun to attain his spiritual potential, had an honorable future before him. Even in his own lifetime, Jeffers held that man already possessed the wherewithal (but none of the resolve) to "choose truth" at last. This discrepancy between man's potential and his actual performance deeply grieved and dismayed the poet of Tor House. To the end, however, Robinson Jeffers cherished the long-term hope that man might one day "come of age", that, in the words of an old friend, humanity might "pass through the present crisis, and emerge in a complete renaissance of godliness."

This thesis has dealt with two of Robinson Jeffers' themes, God and man, as divisible entities. Ultimately, the two themes are one, for a great poet cannot write of God without including that most alert of God's worshippers, man.

Robinson Jeffers was raised a protestant Christian; his rearing, though strict, was not conventional. At an early age, Jeffers was off on his own seeking to encounter a more pantheistic God than he had been brought up to worship. The early verse (particularly Californians of 1916) is--given familiarity with Jeffers' mature poetry--a rich vein of Jeffers' views on God and man. That extraordinary trove of Jeffers ideas lay dormant, however, until an event which we can only surmise took place. That event, so seminal in its influence in the subsequent life and work of the poet, was what must be termed his mystical encounter with the God he had so diligently sought for years. The time and circumstances of such an experience are matters of conjecture. The event is best known by its results, for the man of middling talent and ponderous designs was suddenly transformed into a poet of titanic genius and positive thrust. There is little direct record of that experience in Jeffers' poetry. Perhaps that experience, so dynamic it can be felt towering behind the work just as Una's presence is assuredly but intangibly there in all of Jeffers' poems, was too personal and indescribable to be groped after in a poem--in the same manner Robinson Jeffers felt about the divinity of

The coast hills at Sovranes Creek

.

This place is the noblest thing I have ever seen.
No imaginable
Human presence here could do anything
But dilute the lonely self-watchful passion.

A place too noble to describe, too divine to trick down into a poem. Was it here that Jeffers encountered his God? Or perhaps the final 'conversion' of the poet to his determined pantheistic allegiance came--as Jeffers often prescribed--slowly through silent exposure to the beauties of God's creation.

The searing impact of Jeffers' religious experience provides the core for his poetry. More than any other factor, Robinson Jeffers' theology is central to the understanding of what he actually wrote. His view of the omnipotent, monistic, self-torturing God of fate is the primum mobile of Jeffers' achievement as poet.

Because he is so intensely religious, Jeffers has been intensely misunderstood by his own secular era. The God whose signature is the beauty of things is undeniably present in the natural world of his making, a world which should give man solace and inspiration. But an order of men devotedly in tune with the God of the world is yet to be born.

Jeffers tried steadfastly to avoid the stigma of attempting to pose as a savior of mankind, the last mission he would have

undertaken. Jeffers' theology seeks to uncenter man from himself to enable man to encounter the real God and live a fulfilled life free of man's unique vices: cruelty, filth and superstition. In writing of man, Jeffers' purpose was twofold: to show men of today a way out of themselves and--however haltingly--toward God, and to point the way of the future by disseminating, even in a dying age, the seeds of a holier future. This latter purpose--however visionary--was the real intent of the man whose spirit will continue to utter:

I admired the beauty
While I was human, now I am part of the beauty.
I wander in the air;
Being mostly gas and water, and flow in the ocean;
Touch you and Asia
At the same moment; have a hand in the sunrises
And the glow of this grass.
I have left the light precipitate of ashes to earth
For a love-token.

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